

EXEGESIS UMBRAE - VOX OCCULTA -

PROJECT ANGELBOOK

VOLUME XIII - PART 5

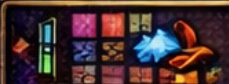
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EZEKIEL REDIK YARBROUGH

Exegesis Umbrae – Vox Occulta
– Project AngelBook – Volume
XIII – Part 5
By Ezekiel Redik Yarbrough
(DBM ECLIPZE)

Liminal Archivist's Note

On the Preservation of Distorted Gnosis and the Dying Digital Veil

There is a strange ache that comes from spending all day in the ruins of spiritual memory.

Fifty books made in one day—an inhuman output—should feel like a triumph. But when the source material is splintered, hostile, and drenched in egoic inversion, what remains is not pride... but hollowness.

This volume, like many in this phase, is not composed of my own words.

It is an act of preservation, not expression.

It is a documentation of liminal knowledge, scraped from a dying web—the final breath of spiritual forums, parapsychology ephemera, early occultist blogs, and yes, even the darker corridors of modern satanic movements.

And herein lies the tension:

Much of what is presented under the name Satanism is a distorted half-truth.

It correctly identifies that Yahweh is not the Most High, and in this way, it mirrors certain Gnostic insights—

but then it derails into ego exaltation, materialism, and psychic hostility. It gets halfway to freedom... and then builds a new prison out of flame and shadow.

And yet—

amidst the mockery, venom, and inversions,

there are real spiritual technologies embedded in the code.

Meditation techniques, psychic development maps, astral awareness, breath control, and ritual frameworks.

Not all of it is corrupted.

Some of it is usable tech.

Some of it may be ancient... wearing a new mask.

So I do not endorse what is preserved here.

But I also refuse to let it vanish into untraceable digital decay.

This is an act of containment as much as curation.

I name this phase liminal, because I know it will not last.

There is only so much of the old internet left to preserve.

Only so much unindexed gnosis hiding behind broken blog links and .org forums that haven't been cached since 2012.

When this phase ends, and I return to creation, I will draw from this tomb of fragments with clarity and discernment.

But for now, I am the one who stands in the gateway—

Archiving the bones, sealing the jars, lighting one gold-lettered candle above a chamber of shadows.

To the reader: proceed with awareness.

This is not scripture.

This is sediment.

It is archived because it is dangerous.

And dangerous knowledge, when preserved with respect, often becomes a mirror for deeper truth.

—Ezekiel Redik Yarbrough

Liminal Phase – Discretio Luminis

measurable effects. (My feeling is that such effects are limited in scope to participants in the rituals and people who have knowledge of their occurrence, whether such knowledge is true or false.)

Various factions of magicians struggled to survive in the early half of the twentieth century, against an increasingly Christian atheist culture; that is, a materialistic populace concerned almost exclusively with day-to-day life and easy entertainment, but still paying occasional lip service to Christianity and suspicious of all other religions. Most of the inheritors of nineteenth-century magical paganism were hopelessly fragmented and dogmatized, incapable of working together and resolving their differences.

In the late forties, Gerald Gardner began publishing books on witchcraft. Gardner was a known associate of Aleister Crowley's and his rituals use a lot of symbolism drawn from Crowley, but only a few actual references to Crowley. He is also reported to have associated with Theosophist groups. Crowley was one of the chief inheritors of the jumble left at the end of the nineteenth century, as well as a traveller and student in Eastern lands. In any case, Gardner (after Crowley) called for yet another neo-classicism, following the pattern of all the other resurgences of Graeco-Roman paganism, but more explicitly religious.

The laudable looseness of Gardner's system was more attractive to magically inclined people than the Golden Dawn and Theosophy splinters remaining. It freed them to create on their own, and they went at it with a vengeance. One reason for the greater effective freedom was that Gardner was not as hard an act to follow as many of the Golden Dawn leaders. He was soon gone beyond by his students, many of whom went off to form their own Gardnerian splinters and mythological histories of their origin.

Another reason was the less formidable Gardnerian system of initiation. Most magical groups had complex multi-layered spiritual hierarchies. These were supposed to represent psychological fact, but little in the way of acceptable empirical observation was used to correct these schemes, mostly drawn from loose interpretations of the Kabala, and they can't be said to have really compelling inter-individual force. These were replaced by a simple hierarchy of three grades. This was the high-level structure of the Golden Dawn, and of a number of Masonic groups, which divided their degrees into categories. The third grade was no longer reserved for secret chiefs who almost certainly never existed or for mythological prophets, and the initiations had a more joyful and celebratory character, rather than a system of awful psychological ordeals. (I feel that the emphasis on ordeals and spiritual hierarchy was a product of Christian influence, with the triumph of martyrdom as a supreme spiritual experience and the hierarchic nature of the Church, and that a simpler formula based on Thelemic growth, like the dominant neo-pagan formula, rather than Christian death/rebirth is more appropriate.)

A common claim among neo-pagans is that paganism was suddenly revealed to the world in the fifties after centuries of hiding. This is demonstrably false; all that is needed is a bit of history, textual analysis, and symbolic comparison to see how close

neo-paganism (as the movement came to be known in the sixties) is to its known historical antecedents. But mythological histories are themselves traditional in world religions. While it is important to know the real history of a religion, this does not invalidate the possible value of mythological tales of the origin, because these serve as fictional statements of intent, often incorporating powerful symbolism. They have literary value in this respect; and literary or other artistic value is a type of spiritual value.

Modern religious paganism has made a unique contribution. No eclectic/pagan movement of the historical past has brought the contributions of paleolithic shamanism into the fold as well as has neo-paganism. In large part this is due to a rise in knowledge of such religions at the same time as the rise of neo-paganism. This is an extremely valuable contribution; in shamanism lies the roots of all human religion. A coven meeting still resembles a Golden Dawn lodge considerably more than it does a shamanistic lodge, despite the valuable addition of techniques originating in shamanism.

This has been a necessarily brief and incomplete account. I have not mentioned Rabelais, the Rosicrucians, the decadent poets, Nietzsche, de Sade, Levi, Gurdjieff, James, Augustine, Shakespeare, Masonry, Paine, American utopian communities, Jung, Merlin, art and spirit, or Gnosticism, all of which are vital elements of the story; I have given short shrift to the psychical movement and its influence on nineteenth and twentieth century paganism; and I have neglected many other relevant topics. But I hope this will suffice as a brief overview of the pagan history preceding neo-paganism.
http://maroney.org/Essays/Pentagram_Ritual.html

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On the Lesser Banishing

Ritual of the Pentagram

by Tim Maroney (1984)

The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram (LBR) is one of the chief rituals of Western Magick. It has been with us at least since the Golden Dawn of the nineteenth century, and it has penetrated into all the many Golden Dawn spinoffs, including Neo-Paganism. Yet there is still no widely available, clear instruction. The directions of the magical orders are mere mnemonics for those who are assumed to have personal instructors. To formulate my personal approach to the ritual, to aid any others who may be considering practicing the LBR, and to satisfy the idle curiosity of any gawking onlookers, I have put together this short discussion of the ritual and its symbolism and performance.

A. Intent of the Ritual

Ritual is a form of moving meditation and the LBR is a tool to facilitate meditation. The real action of a magick ritual takes place in the mind, in my view, but not all ritualists would agree. Many would say that the effect of the LBR is to create a fortified and cleansed area on the astral plane, which they think is as real as Hoboken, if not more so. It doesn't really matter in practice as the only effect we know is the one in our

perceptions.

The experience of a proper LBR is pleasurable and soothing, yet energizing and empowering. One is made at home in the mystical realm, protected from lurkers and phantasms by strongly imagined wards. This solace from mundane experience is a precondition for more serious works of meditation or ritual, but it can also form a healthy part of the life of the mind by itself.

B. The Ritual

I'll just reprint the description of the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram from Liber O, a publication of the occult order A.∴ A.∴.

i.

Touching the forehead say Ateh (Unto Thee),

ii.

Touching the breast say Malkuth (The Kingdom),

iii.

Touching the right shoulder, say ve-Geburah (and the Power),

iv.

Touching the left shoulder, say ve-Gedulah (and the Glory),

v.

Clasping the hands upon the breast, say le-Olahm, Amen (To the Ages, Amen).

vi.

Turning to the East, make a pentagram (that of Earth) with the proper weapon (usually the Wand). Say (i.e. vibrate) IHVH.

vii.

Turning to the South, the same, but say ADNI.

viii.

Turning to the West, the same, but say AHIH.

ix.

Turning to the North, the same, but say AGLA.

[Pronounce: Ye-ho-wau, Adonai, Eheieh, Agla.]

x.

Extending the arms in the form of a cross say,

xi.

Before me Raphael;

xii.

Behind me Gabriel;

xiii.

On my right hand Michael;

xiv.

On my left hand Auriel;

xv.

For about me flames the Pentagram,

xvi.

And in the Column stands the six-rayed Star.

xvii-xxi.

Repeat (i) to (v), the "Qabalistic Cross."

C. Preliminary Acts

There are a number of necessary preconditions in any cleansing ritual. Not the least important are the physical conditions.

It's not a good idea to just launch into this thing from a standing start. You should start by evacuating any bodily wastes. Heavy food in the digestive tract is bound to interfere, so don't pig out right before practice. If your nose is clogged, clear it. (There are some gross yogic techniques for doing this if necessary.) Remove any serious muscle

tensions; I do this in two ways, by stretching and by sitting quietly for a few minutes. If you do hatha yoga, this would be a good time to sit in a pose like vajrasana or lotus.

It's best to bathe or shower first, and put on special clothes worn only during ritual, but those are optional considerations.

It's very useful to have a room in your home that is either set aside for ritual, or can be transformed into a suitable room readily. In 1984, I shared my ritual room with my lover, who uses it for typing. This was a fortunate arrangement, since we both want the room to be simple, uncluttered, and non-distracting, and all I had to do is hide the typewriter and throw a cloth over the desk. If you can't arrange something like that, make sure you at least have enough free floor space in the center of the room you're using for freedom of movement.

D. Ritual Gestures

You should refer to the ritual above while reading this section.

The "Qabalistic Cross"

The "Qabalistic Cross" (steps i-v) is a self-consecration. The magician becomes a sanctified instrument for the execution of the rest of the ritual. This can't be an empty exercise; linger on each phrase for as long as it takes to form some strong, albeit brief concentration on the meaning.

Think of the short prayer of the Qabalistic Cross as a baptism, using light rather than water. Imagine that your body has "centers" which you are bringing to life by anointing them with your hand. There are five such "centers". At the end of the Cross, remain for a moment in that posture, upright, hands clasped, feeling the Cross within yourself, yourself as the Cross. This should bring on a purified perception of the body.

The Cross addresses a second person, a "thee". Who is this mysterious person? "Thee" is your own "higher self", by some readings. If you prefer monotheistic symbolism, read "God[dess]" for "thee". Even for monotheists, the consecration is of yourself, although "by the power of God". The two symbolisms can be mapped easily onto each other; it's an issue of God within or God without.

The "vanilla" version of the Cross is not what most Thelemites use. Instead, go "Atoh" (touch brow), "Aiwass" (touch breast), "Malkuth" (touch genitals), and then the arms as normal. "Aiwass who?" That's a name Crowley's Holy Guardian Angel called itself by. If you attain to the Knowledge and Conversation of your Holy Guardian Angel (as it is so quaintly called), use its name instead of Aiwass. Don't expect this attainment to happen tomorrow or next week; in the Golden Dawn and Thelema, it's a major attainment, the center of the path. But then, you're the only real judge of it.

The Banishing Pentagram of Earth

This pentagram is a five pointed star, point up. To draw it, start from the lower left-hand corner (your left), go up to the top point, and continue from there. The index finger is a

common tool for drawing the stars; it's a very natural way of writing symbols in the air. A good wand can be hard to find.

Note that you do not draw the stars at the end of your finger, but project them outwards as if your finger was a laser, with the stars being drawn by the beam onto an outlying vertical plane - perhaps a few inches short of the wall, or on the wall, or just in a convenient expanse of air. Over time I've come to draw them at the outermost reaches of space, at the thrones of the Guardians of the Watchtowers at the four quarters of the earth, in the flat-earth Christian cosmology employed by the Renaissance magicians Dee and Kelley. This approach sanctifies the entire earth rather than just the room.

Drawing the pentagram will be easy or hard for you, depending on whether you are good at visualization. I'm not, so it's hard. (I'm getting better with practice, though.) Ideally, the stars should be of flame, drawn in the air, but early on a faint outline is no cause to complain. It's not a good idea to use drugs to increase your visualization abilities on a routine basis. If you are experienced with drugs, it may be useful to employ them for an LBR every once in a while just to show you what it could be like.

The pentagram can be a potent symbol. Recall Leonardo's image of the microcosm, i.e., the individual human. The central pentagon represents the torso, the top point the head, the other four points the limbs.

For a religious humanist, the individually named pentagrams are essentially aspects of the higher self, given life/breath by the vibrations of the god-names. For a theist, the pentagrams are anthropomorphic manifestations of deity, summoned by the vibration of god-names.

The Vibration of God-Names

In the LBR, the vibration of the god-names "charges" or "enlivens" the pentagrams in the air. This is difficult to describe, but easy to recognize. There is a feeling of presence in one of these charged warding images - though not necessarily a feeling of true externality or separate intelligence.

We are told to "vibrate" the names. The description and illustration of the "vibration" given in Liber O have been known to mislead people into hilarious postures. What the picture most resembles is the skulking monster from the movie *The Mummy*. To the modern eye, it is remarkable how truly unclear a photograph can be.

I didn't learn how to vibrate a god-name until I signed up with yet another occult order and was taught it in person. I wouldn't wish membership in an occult fraternity on anyone, so here is a description which I hope will be adequate in print.

Vibration phase i - The Sign of the Enterer (1-4)

1. Stand upright. Blow all the air out of your lungs. Hold your arms straight out at your sides.

2a. Close your eyes and inhale nasally, imagining that the breath is the name. The exact nature of this imagination differs from person to person. Thus, you imagine yourself inhaling the name into your lungs.

2b. As you inhale, sweep your forearms smoothly and deliberately up so that your fists rest on your temples.

3. Imagine the breath moving down through your torso slowly, and through your pelvis, your legs, and finally to the soles of your feet. (Don't do this so slowly that you are hurting for air when the name reaches your feet!)

4a. The instant the inhaled vibrational name hits the soles of your feet, imagine it rushing back up and out.

4b. Simultaneously, throw yourself forward, thrusting your left foot forward about twelve inches (or thirty centimeters) and catching yourself on it. Your hands shoot forward, together, like a diver or like Superman taking flight. You bend forward at the waist so that your torso winds up parallel to the floor.

4c. The air in your lungs should be blown out through your nose at the same time, but imagine the name shooting out straight ahead.

Steps 3-4 are known as the Sign of the Enterer, or of Horus. This symbolizes powerful active energy. The Enterer should be something of a "rush". The vibrational name is projected outwards into more tangible manifestation - in this case, in the pentagrams of the LBR, which are charged by the force of the projected god-names.

Vibration phase ii - The Sign of Silence (5)

5. Finally, withdraw into a standing position, left arm hanging at your side, right forefinger on lips, left foot pointing ninety degrees out from the body.

Step 5 is called the Sign of Silence, or of Harpocrates. This Egyptian god was mistakenly believed (at the turn of the century) to pertain to silence, because his finger or thumb was touching his lips. This gesture is now believed to be a symbol of childhood; this correction appears in the World card of Crowley's Book of Thoth Tarot deck. Harpocrates was the god of the Sun at dawn, and so symbolizes wonder, beauty, potential, growth. So, step 5 may be done in this academically corrected light instead.

However, the "hush" gesture of the Golden Dawn Sign of Silence is adequate for the modern occultist, even if deprived of A Divine Identification. It is a common gesture, at least in European/American culture, meaning silence. Silence balances the ultra-active Sign of the Enterer better than does the more scholarly positive/active "Sign of Harpocrates the Rising Sun", and silence is surely no alien concept to mystics.

You'll note that "Ye-ho-wau" is given as the pronunciation of YHWH. Modern scholarship has a different take on the pronunciation of the Big Guy's name. I use

"Yahweh" rather than the "Ye-ho-wau" of Liber O because that's what the Catholic priests of my youth taught me to say, and I've never been able to shake it off. Use whatever pronunciation you prefer, or a different name altogether.

The Invocation

The pentagrams are given form by the drawing, life by the vibration, identity by the four-part prayer of steps (x) to (xiv). Some people do very elaborate visualizations of angelic guardians on each of (xi) to (xiv). Because of my tragic personal deficiencies, I am content with strong feelings of presence, identity, and divinity in each of the four directions.

A horizontal cross is built up step by step as you say, "Before me Raphael", etc, with you at the center; and the position of your arms forms a vertical cross, a renewal of the Qabalistic Cross from the start of the ritual. You may feel a peculiar rising and expansion when both of these crosses are formulated. One has become the center of the geometry of the space, and it is like a world in itself, cut adrift from the mundane currents of everyday experience.

Steps (xv) and (xvi) are when the real banishing takes place, during "For about me flames the pentagram, and in the column stands the six-rayed star." A great pulse of force is emitted during these steps, imposing the personal will on the space and clearing it of all hostile influences.

After this is done, the invoked "archangels" maintain the banishing effect, guarding in all four directions. Of course this talk of angels is nonsense - the importance lies in the psychological effect. Whether there "really is" an archangel standing there keeping out inimical spirits is not important. The "feeling of cleanliness" is what matters.

Concluding Cross

The final Qabalistic Cross is an affirmation of the completeness and symmetry of the ritual, and also a new self-consecration. This is more efficacious than the previous Cross because it is done in a banished environment.

E. Comments on the Ritual

With practice, you will no doubt come up with your own style of performance, and your own different symbolism for ritual acts. Different people do rituals as differently as actors play parts, even though the lines and motions may be fundamentally the same. (The alternative is an authoritarian, dogmatic horror which is alien to the deep occult understanding of religion, but is still common in magical groups.) Slavish imitation will get you nowhere in Magick - except, perhaps, to a high spiritual degree in some parochial in-group!

The Christianity - or at least angelic monotheism - of the ritual symbolism may give pause to some. Many of us involved in occultism have negative feelings about Christianity. These may be somewhat justified, but there are a few saving graces here.

First, as with any ritual, you should feel free to make it yours, to mess around with it. If you don't start to at least play with the styles of a ritual after a while, you are probably not doing it very well. It is perfectly legitimate to substitute cognate symbols at any time. However, the saying in the martial arts is that one first learns another's style, and after mastering it, moves on to create one's own. For a beginner, it will be easiest simply to use an existing ritual form in order to explore the meaning of a banishing ritual.

Given experience with the ritual, which transcends any mere set of symbols, one may devise a form more in keeping with the emergence of one's personal style. For instance, Neo-Pagans use various highly reified forms of the same basic ritual in many of their traditions, but with non-Christian deities, spirits, and heroes at the quarters. Aleister Crowley wrote a new version, the Star Ruby, which used the names of deities and officers from his "Thelemic" system rather than monotheist gods and angels.

In any case, of those people who abhor Christianity, how many have looked at some of the practices of historical pagans in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas? No religion should ever be "accepted" by an occultist. When using any religion's symbolism, the adept should cut to its sacred poetical core, and discard the political dross. By this standard, Christianity looks hardly better or worse than any other religion. Without this selection process, and by factoring in historical excesses and power plays, almost all known religions look as bad as Christianity. In other words, those who happily use Norse gods, Arthurian heroes, Taoist immortals, Voudoun loas, or what have you in rituals, but never touch a Christian angel, are guilty of the same narrowness they impart to the Christians.

Having performed the banishing ritual, one is now ready to do a formal invocation, an evocation, a meditation, or whatever the overall spiritual purpose may be. The LBR is a preliminary ceremony, although it has a beneficial effect in itself. It can profitably be done as a stand-alone ritual, but you should move on. Its mastery is a first step to adepthood.

http://maroney.org/Essays/The_Problems_of_Syncretism.html

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The Problems of Syncretism

by Tim Maroney (1997-8)

"Syncretism" is a technical term in religious studies describing the combination of one mythic figure with another from a different tradition. Syncretism has been practiced from ancient times to the modern day. During the Ptolemaic rule over Egypt, many syncretistic deities were created, such as Hermanubis, a combination of the Greek Hermes and the Egyptian Anubis. Later, during the Graeco-Roman mystery period, syncretism became common within the mystery traditions, the rituals of which often featured prayers which stated that a particular deity had many other names, and listed those names. Syncretism is an inevitable consequence of internationalism and it is not surprising that syncretism has become a common part of the new occult and pagan religions of today's multicultural world.

Sometimes syncretism seems to go too far. For instance, in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft and related modern occult traditions, it is said that "all gods are The God and all goddesses are The Goddess." The theory of the religion is that a Goddess and a God ruling over the world in a marital union and producing all phenomena. This has often been criticized as reducing all the characters of world myth to mere gender attributes, submerging their individual complexity in an overarching doctrinal agenda. In another case, the Golden Dawn, an influential occult group of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, combined Egyptian deities with Hebrew divine names from the Bible and other sources. In fact, as most people know, there is no small amount of historical animosity between the ancient Egyptian and Hebrew traditions. You wouldn't invite them to the same party, so how can they both be at the same ritual - more, even conflated, so that an Egyptian and Hebrew name are seen as synonymous?

The ancient Greek and Roman syncretists were often just as insensitive and poorly informed, and their practices of assimilation are largely responsible for the disrepute in which syncretism is held today in the academic community. The academic response, however, is starting to become less dogmatic, or at least more readily challenged, as in Kingsley's recent book on Empedocles(1), or the concerns raised by Robert F. Campany in his comparison of the ancient Chinese sage Xunzi with the pre-modern mythic theorist Durkheim(2).

The new critique, self-referentially including scholarship itself among its subjects, notes that it is just as much an error to hold religious practitioners to the criteria of current scholarship, and to derogate their efforts for their inevitable failure to satisfy as-yet-uninvented criteria, as it is to dismiss the efforts of traditional commentators to understand their own ritual and mythic practices. Both these naive critiques of traditional religious philosophy depend on ill-founded assumptions about the unique superiority of current scholarly methods and viewpoints.

In syncretism as practiced either in ancient or modern times we find conflation which are meant to be taken as literal statements about an underlying substrate of symbolic commonality. That is, the connection between, say, the Egyptian Osiris and the Qabalistic Tiphareth, is presented as a longstanding fact which has always been true, even if it was not well known. Many occult syncretisers claim that a connection such as this was always known by a secret group of initiates who have only now cleared this mystic truth for public release(3). Judged as comparative religion or textual analysis this sort of assertion is defective. It is therefore tempting to dismiss syncretism as a failed attempt at amateur scholarship.

If we look at what these commentators are trying to accomplish in context, however, we wind up at a different model. Although a claim of traditionalism is made, new myths are being created. Specifically, the myth of syncretists is that all known myths are only differentiations of a single unifying primordial myth, sometimes called the Secret Doctrine. This type of universalist myth can be found not only in occult and Neo-Platonic sources, but in Freemasonry, Baha'i, pre-modern comparativism, popular Roman

attitudes towards foreign gods, and so forth. The myth that Osiris is an expression of Tiphareth deserves the same deference that the observer gives to any other myth, and its faux historical content is no more a matter for concern than, say, the fact that Pandora was not really the first woman. These are the terms on which syncretistic statements need to be engaged: as expressions of the myth of a common system behind the appearance of diversity in myth and ritual.

(There is a risk of condescension in this reinterpretation. Writers like Blavatsky and Crowley really believe that they are contributing to comparative religion, and letting them off the critical hook by transposing their writing to a new domain - that of myth-making - derogates their own account of their intent. However, the fact is that when judged by the standards of fields like anthropology, religious studies, or even philosophy, their work fails to make much of a contribution. We can take them at their face value, and so be forced to dismiss their work completely because it does not succeed in the scholarly arena, or we can try to recognize that there is a difference in intention between their work and scholarly work, and so recognize its value with respect to its actual context. The latter approach is less hostile and dismissive, although either interpretation would be rejected by the writers themselves due to their insistence that they are making a scholarly contribution.)

The act of correlation is creative because it is largely arbitrary. Major figures such as Apollo have so many attributes that they could be correlated at some small remove to almost anything. The selection of some particular attribute (such as music, inducement of visionary experience, solar illumination, the progression of the seasons, stateliness, archery, or what have you) as the primary attribute by which Apollo is connected to the universalist table of correspondences is an arbitrary choice by the syncretistic practitioner. Apollo is not Ra and the claim that he is Ra creates a new myth. Through a set of arbitrary choices of this kind, each of which reduces a complex symbol to a simple cipher, a new universalist myth consisting of a set of relationships is created.

While a table of correspondence à la Agrippa, Barrett or Crowley is useless for the scholar, for the ritualist it serves as a new kind of myth from which ritual practices may be generated by juxtaposing the contents of the columns. It masquerades as the key of all religions, but it is not that - it is an original and creative divination table, based on a set of freshly-minted mythic "facts" about the relations between traditional symbols. It is above all a practical tool, and judging it by the same standards as a dissertation in religious studies would miss the point, even though its creators might want it to be judged that way.

An objection to syncretism that has often been raised is that it leads to awkward and inelegant combinations of elements that are actually irreconcilable. Again the strongest example is the combination of divine names from the devoutly anti-Egyptian Hebrew tradition with the names and images of Egyptian deities from the 19th-century Egyptology craze. While this criticism may be valid on a literary level - a great deal of freshly-rolled myth is poorly crafted - it is inevitable that in a system based on a myth of universalism, disparate symbols will be deliberately juxtaposed. This illustrates the basic

premise of the myth, that all the appearances of diversity in religious symbolism are only illusionary, and that on an inner level accessible to the initiated, the symbols are all instantiations of an abstract unifying monomyth.

These juxtapositions of opposed symbols are not ignorant or careless. They represent a deliberate flouting of taboos. The symbolic universalist knows full well that it is offensive to an ordinary Christian to say that an aspect of Jehovah is virtually synonymous with a Greek god, an astrological sign, and an Arabic demon, and so he or she chooses to be offensive, to express a protest against these differentiations. A system that did not contain these "erroneous" juxtapositions would be a system that did not express the universalist myth. Similarly, the popular Roman belief that foreign deities were only degraded forms of their own specifically expressed a myth of the propriety of Roman world domination.

Obviously, a mythic system based on protest creates conflicts with those who are dedicated to the targets of the protest. A devout Jew, steeped in an idea of sacralization which is rooted in the overthrow of Egyptian polytheism by Hebrew monotheism, must find it grotesque and absurd to combine the two traditions. From this conservative Jewish perspective, universalism is errorneous in its leveling, while to the universalist, traditional Judaism is erroneous in its parochialism. It is not the work of the scholar to resolve such disputes, because they are not disputes on a scholarly plane - they derive from the social and emotional factors by which people accept certain myths and reject others. The scholar is treading on very dangerous ground in making normative statements about mythic acceptance and rejection and must ordinarily be content with simple observation⁽⁴⁾. At the same time, it is possible to contribute descriptively in explaining in what ways the criticisms that each side aims at the other fail to accurately engage the other's intent and assumptions. In the end syncretism is a religious practice, which the scholar must study with the same deference or lack thereof that would be afforded any other practice.

Notes:

(1) Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

(2) In Ronald L. Grimes (ed.), *Readings in Ritual Studies* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), pp. 86-103.

(3) One can easily find claims of this sort in occult writers such as Blavatsky, Mathers, and Crowley.

(4) For some important considerations in normative discourse on ritual and myth, see Ronald L. Grimes, *Ritual Criticism* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990).

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Theory of Divination

by Tim Maroney (1990)

"Divination" is the production of information by magical, occult, or supernatural means.

Tarot cards, I Ching, astrology, and the other well-known oracles are forms of divination.

Many other forms of divination are known, such as the prophecy of the Pythoness at the ancient shrine of Apollo at Delphi; oneiromancy or dream interpretation; geomancy, divination by making dots in a tray of sand; bibliomancy, flipping randomly to a passage in a book (usually the Bible); chiromancy or palm-reading; necromancy, communing with dead souls; pyromancy or divination by flames; crytallomancy or crystal-gazing; ornithomancy, interpretation of the flights and cries of birds; and, of course, the Tibetan milk-bottle method of Special Agent Dale Cooper.

There are numerous theories of how divination works, or does not work. I will attempt to present a reasonably objective survey of the theories, not neglecting the most skeptical or farfetched.

The discussion is general and need not be taken as applying strictly to the Tarot. Some of the theories apply only to methods of divination which are manually controlled by the diviner, but other theories apply equally well to all methods.

Sub-Topics:

Unconscious Mind

Synchronicity

Order from Chaos

Spirits of Wisdom

Magical Alphabet

Reader & Querent

Telling the Future

Unconscious Mind

Where does the information of divination come from? One answer is that it comes from the unconscious portions of the human mind.

The unconscious mind is composed of all those parts of the mind which are active but which are not apparent to the conscious, speaking parts of the mind. The unconscious was a mainstay of the psychoanalytic theories popular early in the twentieth century, but it has survived the collapse of those pre-scientific theories. It now appears in some modern cognitive and neurological theories of the psyche. After all, it's obvious that there is a great deal of information processing of which we are unaware.

The theory of divination by the unconscious mind is plainly applicable to some forms of divination, such as dream interpretation and the oracle at Delphi, but the theory is not as clear with respect to manual oracles, such as Tarot cards, the I Ching, and geomancy.

How does the information travel from the unconscious mind to the hands, or to the interpretation?

One of the common answers bears on the theory of Order from Chaos. This answer holds that the patterns generated by a manual oracle are truly random. All the information is created by the mind struggling to make order out of the oracular chaos. In this version of "Order from Chaos", the emerging pattern is assumed to come from the unconscious mind, and so to provide a "window" into the unconscious. A Tarot spread is a sort of Rorschach blot.

Another popular answer says that perhaps the unconscious mind determines the physical result of the oracle. The unconscious is supposed to be watching the diviner's progress very carefully and controlling the motions of the diviner's hands so that the oracle takes a particular shape. Whether this can actually happen has not been subjected to rigorous experiment.

Finally, the unconscious mind may use psychic powers of some kind to shape the oracle; for instance, telekinesis, or perhaps the manipulation of probabilities. No such psychic powers have ever been shown to exist, but it is an attractive theory to many people, and in practice it is probably the most popular version of the theory of the unconscious mind.

In the theories of psychic powers or unconscious determination, note the effects of practice. The unconscious mind is no more infallible than the conscious mind, so the more spreads it performs, the less chance it has of flubbing the shuffle.

The question remains of why we would want to contact the unconscious mind at all.

The most common view in occult or parapsychological circles is that the unconscious mind is the repository of immense wisdom, perhaps through contact with divine beings, the ultimate ground of being, the higher self, or psychic powers.

A more mundane psychological justification is that the conscious and unconscious minds can be considered excessively separated, or even at odds. In some psychological theories of transformation the goal is to bring the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind closer to each other, so that the whole mind may function more harmoniously. An oracular practice might be effective in teaching the two minds to work together and to respect each others' interests.

The most mundane answer says that two heads are better than one. The unconsciousness is no better or worse than the consciousness, and there is no special merit from bringing the two closer as a process of self-transformation. But just as it is valuable to discuss problems with someone else (depending, of course, on the other person -- this principle should not encourage you to pester Manuel Noriega or Tammy Faye Bakker with your problems), so it is valuable to see what the unconscious mind thinks about issues. It may be right or wrong, but a more rounded perspective will likely

result from hearing its side.

In either of the more mundane answers -- perhaps even in the occult one -- it is important to note that one is not opening a doorway into Absolute Truth. One is merely learning how the unconscious mind feels about the issue. So, a reading of success or failure would not necessarily show that an endeavor really was so fated. It would show only that the unconscious mind was of an optimistic or pessimistic opinion.

Synchronicity

Synchronicity is a parapsychological concept usually attributed to the psychotherapist Carl Jung. Jung called it "an acausal connecting principle"; that is, apparently separate events are meaningfully connected by synchronicity, outside the normal laws of cause and effect. In Tarot, the seemingly unconnected events linked by synchronicity are the shuffling of the deck of cards on one hand, and the meaning which is incorporated in the fall of those cards on the other.

However, the root idea is far older than Jung. Synchronicity is the mystical idea that there are no accidents, or that every event is an interaction between God and the soul. No matter how arbitrary it may seem to be, each event actually contains spiritual meaning, and wisdom largely consists in unwinding this hidden meaning behind the surface of events.

Synchronicity is a common explanation of random oracles such as the Tarot, I Ching, tea leaves, and ornithomancy, or reading the flights of birds. The appearance of randomness is only an illusion caused by our blindness to ultimate spiritual reality. The "random" fall of Tarot cards actually contains acausally transmitted information, which the diviner unwinds and interprets.

Granting this idea, why is the synchronistic information worth finding? The answer lies in the occult theory of the universe, which ascribes divinity (personal or impersonal) to the invisible acausal world. As the Tarot spread and other quasi-random synchronistic phenomena partake strongly of the nature of this hidden world, they are imbued with its characteristics of wisdom and illumination. In this way they become links to higher intelligence.

Synchronicity has been much in vogue in occultism for several decades. It is easy for anyone to verify that once they accept the principle of acausal connection, the number of apparent synchronicities increases to a remarkable degree.

Believers hold that this increase is a result of the soul becoming more attuned to God, or to its own true nature, or to the ultimate ground of reality, or to platypus people from Pluto (according to one UFO cult in New Jersey).

Skeptics hold that the increase in synchronicities is only a result of the desire to see them, and of practice in ascribing synchronistic meaning to disconnected events.

Synchronicity is practically impossible to put to any kind of formal test, so the impasse between believers and skeptics is likely to persist for quite a while. Neither side can muster a genuinely compelling argument. The believers' "tests" are far too informal for skeptics. Skeptics can't prove that the information isn't there, though -- they can only point out that its presence has not been proven. Neither side has the tools to convince the other.

Depending on the details of one's interpretation of synchronicity, it may or may not be appropriate to use automatic random oracles under a synchronistic interpretation. These are computer programs which shuffle the computerized cards or roll the digital dice themselves, with no opportunity for human intervention or for actual randomness.

Shuffling a physical deck of cards is a good approximation to a truly random process, because shuffling involves millions of variables few of whose values are known. Computers don't generate truly random numbers; they start with a "seed" number and perform complicated arithmetic transformations which turn it into another number, which becomes the seed for the next pass. The pseudo-random numbers generated by deterministic computer programs are not a good approximation to true randomness.

If your idea of synchronicity implies non-determinism through a chaotic process like shuffling, then automatic oracles are not for you. If your idea is a more all-embracing mystical notion, then complete automation should make no difference.

However, automatic oracles tend to be excessively distancing; the diviner does not feel involved in the process. For that reason, Tarot software should require manual influences on the fall of cards, much like physical shuffling. The user could, for instance, decide where to cut the deck, and the two stacks can then be riffled together. This brings the user into the process, and it should be compatible with any positive theory of divination.

Order From Chaos

The most skeptical assessment of divination holds that there really is no intrinsic meaning in an oracle. The cards just happen to fall a certain way, and no spirits, influences of the unconscious mind, or synchronistic factors put any information into their fall. The diviner is seeing ducks and horses in the clouds.

The straightforward application of this theory removes all motivation to perform divinations. Since there is no information in an oracle, divination is at best a waste of time.

However, skepticism and Tarot reading are not incompatible, though both skeptics and believers often assume otherwise. Modified skeptical positions hold that the process of attributing meaning to chaos can have positive effects, even though the meaning is merely an illusion in the mind.

Storytelling, for example, involves quasi-random factors in decisions on variables such as character attributes, settings, and plot structure. This would only be a problem if we failed to make a coherent story out of these decisions, or confused the story for reality.

A fiction writer might use the Tarot or other oracles for story guidance, while still convinced of the idea that the fall of cards is truly random. Similarly for other artists, but this approach is not confined to the arts. One might try to divine problems in one's real life under this theory, in hopes that adding information to the spread would lead to insights that would not have arisen through the unassisted thinking process.

Such a skeptical diviner would have total freedom to reject the reading, but believers in unconscious, synchronistic, or spiritualist theories of divination would not. If you believe that the spread really is meaningless, you are not bound to accept what it seems to say.

Another skeptical interpretation is that unconscious factors steer the process of interpretation -- not the fall of the cards, but the interpretation of their fall, a psychological process. Just as we do not decide consciously what to see in the clouds or in a Rorschach blot, we do not decide consciously what to see in a Tarot spread, but the outcome reveals something of our unconscious minds. We see patterns that we are unconsciously predisposed to see, and we learn about ourselves by revealing our predispositions.

Spirits of Wisdom

The most occult theory of the workings of divination is that the oracle is manipulated by spirits. The spirits may work through one's hands, or influence the oracle through more direct magical means such as telekinesis.

This leaves many questions open. What is the nature of the spirits? Are the spirits personal or universal? Why is it valuable to learn what they think about an issue? How do spirits manipulate the oracle? Why do they consent to being used in this fashion? Is there one general spirit per oracle, or a single ruler of all forms of divination, or do different spirits share responsibility over the same oracle, or is there one divinatory spirit per person?

All of these questions have any number of answers, so this entry can only give a shallow survey. Apologies are tendered to any theory which is underrepresented here.

One may take the approach favored by the more intolerant of the monotheistic factions. All spirits of magic are demons, that is, fallen angels. Different demons are delegated to divinations at the convenience of the infernal hierarchy. The oracle is manipulated through the powers which all angels, fallen or not, possess by virtue of their special creation by God. Demons are real spiritual personages having an objective existence in the spiritual world. They consent to being used by the diviner because the practice of divination leads to eternal damnation for the practitioner -- as do all magical practices not formally approved by the Bible and one's church. Demons earnestly desire that the living share the demons' misery in Hell, and divination is one way of bringing about this

foul end.

A person accepting this model of divination would avoid all practices of divination beyond prayer to God and perhaps bibliomancy, the random selection of a verse from the Bible. The idea that angels might manipulate Tarot cards is, of course, damnable heresy.

An equally anti-divinatory theory is the purely skeptical. Discorporate spirits are a traditional fantasy, and assuming their existence is nothing more than self-delusion.

There is a more moderate skeptical view, known to many students of Western Magick, which is really a form of the Unconscious Mind theory. Spiritual beings are viewed as a metaphor for processes of the unconscious mind, which to some extent mimic the structure of the conscious mind and can be seen as "splinter intelligences". Spirits do exist in a sense, but they are strictly personal and even (after a fashion) mundane, being merely another class of psychological phenomenon. They cooperate in divination either because the conscious mind can compel them to do so, or because they understand that their own interests coincide with the overall interests of the psyche. That is, they are either controllable or benign.

A more occult form of the spirit theory holds that spirits are real entities of the spiritual world, but either benign or controllable in temperament, as above. They may influence the oracle either through control of the magician's hands, or through magical powers of some sort.

Most occult systems would hold that a single god (albeit with many names and forms) rules all divination, while each individual form of divination (Tarot, geomancy, I Ching, etc.) has its own ruling spirit or a class of related spirits, who are invoked or evoked for each divination. Thoth is a good choice for an overall spiritual patron of all forms of divination, while the spirits specific to each kind of divination usually go without individual names beyond "spirits of geomancy", etc., and the names of the particular signs of the oracle. Sometimes the classes of spirits are given names or attributes beyond the names and attributes of the system of divination; gnomes are said to rule geomancy, while Mercurial spirits are said to rule the Tarot.

In an alternate occult formula, a specific spirit may be invoked or evoked for a particular act of divination, its identity being harmonious with the nature of the question or problem. A Martial spirit might be evoked to answer a question pertaining to conflict. However, the nature of the spirit must be suited not only to the question but to the oracle. It would do little good to evoke a Mercurial spirit to answer with geomancy, an essentially earthy oracle; nor to evoke an elemental to answer a question through the lofty and abstract I Ching.

Whatever the form of the spirit theory, one should note that it is not without danger. In fact, divination itself is somewhat dangerous, regardless of the theory. For this reason, it is probably wise to perform some simple protective spell (such as the Pentagram Ritual)

before any act of divination, to keep out malign spirits and influences and encourage benign ones; or even just to give a feeling of greater security. This is also a useful technique in combination with the theory of the unconscious mind, so as to banish self-destructive influences.

A short prayer to the god of divination (e.g., Tahuti) would be effective, or a casting of the wards as in traditional occult practice. One need not be unskeptical to recognize the psychological benefits of working in a symbolically cleansed environment.

Here is an adaptation of a traditional Golden Dawn preparatory prayer or spell, suited to the use of the electronic diviner. Touch the side of the computer with the left hand, and hold the wand upright in the right, or hold the right hand in the classic gesture of consecration (first and second fingers upright, ring finger and pinky curled lightly toward the palm), and say:

I invoke thee, I A O, that thou wilt send Heru, the great Angel that is set over the operations of this Secret Wisdom, to lay his hand invisibly upon these crystal and copper thought-forms of art, that thereby we may obtain true knowledge of hidden things, to the glory of thine ineffable Name. Amen.

Magical Alphabet

Divination delivers information from some source to the conscious mind. To accomplish this, any oracle must communicate in some more or less intelligible language.

Looked at another way, any systematic oracle is a language in itself. By various combinations of the symbols of this language, all manner of things may be communicated.

This sort of language, such as the language of the Tarot or the Kabala, is sometimes referred to as a magical alphabet.

That a magical alphabet is invariably vague is its chief objection among skeptics. The argument is that since the symbols of various oracles are so diffuse, there is no real evidence that they communicate anything -- all the meaning is built up in the mind from the random outcome of the oracle, and various tactics of "cold reading" are used to add a layer of apparent meaning. This theory is addressed under Order from Chaos.

The symbols of a magical alphabet are worthy subjects for meditation. Aleister Crowley held that reading Tarot cards in oracles is a lower method than simple meditation on their meaning. R. G. H. Siu said the same of the I Ching, even declining to give the instructions for divination, which had to be added in a publisher's preface. However, divination may, as Crowley also suggested, be the best way to learn the alphabet.

Reader & Querent

In traditional Tarot divination, there is a reader and a querent. The reader acts as a consultant on the Tarot, using it to illuminate an issue for the querent. The reader

typically charges a small fee for this service. Some sources insist that a reader is necessary; otherwise, the prejudices of the querent will dominate the reading. Cynics might point out that this insistence is of financial value to people who derive income from reading Tarot cards.

The way to structure a two-person reading depends on the theory. In all cases, the querent asks the question and the reader interprets the fall of the cards. The fall of the cards is determined by shuffling, which may be a joint process, or it may be done entirely by the reader or by the querent.

If the theory of unconscious determination is used, then the reader should shuffle the cards, though the querent may cut them to feel more involved with the process. The reader should watch the cut carefully so the necessary information may be transmitted to the unconscious mind. The reader is skilled in determining the fall of the cards; the querent is not.

If the synchronicity theory is used, then the querent or the reader may shuffle the cards. It makes no difference, since the synchronistic meaning comes through purely random factors.

If the theory of spirits is used, then again the reader should shuffle, since ordinary people do not particularly want to channel spirits to get a Tarot reading. If they wanted to get their hands that wet, they would probably do the divination themselves. Again, having the querent cut the deck is a meaningless symbol of involvement, but the spirits arrange the deck after the querent cuts it.

If the theory of order from chaos is used, it makes no difference who or what shuffles, just as with synchronicity.

Telling the Future

The popular view of Tarot cards is that they "tell the future". That is the meaning of the popular synonym for divination, "fortune-telling". Any sort of question may be asked of the Tarot cards, which does not exclude telling the future. But that is not the only end to which the cards may be put.

When telling the future, the questions of predestination and psychic powers inevitably arise. If we can accurately read the future, then the future must already exist in some sense, and we must have some way of viewing it.

On the question of predestination, science and philosophy are inconclusive. Modern physics is clear that the world is not deterministic; there are many experiments with physics on a small scale that show nature to be probabilistic. Many things happen on the sub-atomic scale without any real reason, simply because it was more or less likely that they would happen and they wound up happening or not. This would seem to fly in the face of predestination; the future state of the universe depends on truly random and unpredictable events.

But these events may be truly random yet, in a sense, already have happened. Time may be viewed as a fourth dimension like our usual three spatial dimensions. If so, then one may take a static view of the universe's history, in which the whole of time is a static construct when viewed from without, that is, from a five-dimensional perspective. The exact nature of the "arrow of time" has yet to be clearly determined, and it is impossible to say now whether a higher-dimensional traveller would see the past as still with us and the future as already laid out.

The question of psychic powers is even more difficult. No such powers have ever been shown to exist in any replicable experiment; at best, such experiments barely squeak in under the margin of significance, and then only after averaging thousands of trials which are not individually significant.

Yet many people believe in them regardless, and these people erect theories to explain them. One of the more popular theoretical ideas of psychic powers is that the psyche somehow exists in a higher dimension. From a higher-dimensional viewpoint it might be possible to look out over the four-dimensional history of the world and see what is to come.

This is written in 1990 in San Francisco, and it seems rather telling to this writer that of the great events which have taken place recently -- the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the independence of Eastern Europe, the San Francisco earthquake -- none were foretold by psychics. One would think such momentous happenings would fairly blaze forth before a psychic eye, yet they didn't.

It is probably best to use a weaker form of the precognition idea, which does not involve a predestined future or psychic powers. Instead, the unconscious mind is viewed as having the power to perceive more or less where some events are heading, and to present its views on the subject -- which may be right or wrong -- through a Tarot reading. Of course, the conscious mind can also make some predictions based on its knowledge. The idea is that the unconscious mind is attentive to different factors and will make predictions the conscious mind could not.

Another "weak" form of precognition involves synchronicity. Events and Tarot readings are "riding the same waves", so one can cast light on the other.

Finally, it is best to take all answers about the future with a grain of salt. It is also wise to phrase questions in such a way that they ask for perspectives on what is happening and what has happened, and for guidance, rather than for outright predictions of the future.

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Granting this idea, why is the synchronistic information worth finding? The answer lies in the occult theory of the universe, which ascribes divinity (personal or impersonal) to the invisible acausal world. As the Tarot spread and other quasi-random synchronistic phenomena partake strongly of the nature of this hidden world, they are imbued with its characteristics of wisdom and illumination. In this way they become links to higher intelligence.

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Believers hold that this increase is a result of the soul becoming more attuned to God, or to its own true nature, or to the ultimate ground of reality, or to platypus people from Pluto (according to one UFO cult in New Jersey).

Skeptics hold that the increase in synchronicities is only a result of the desire to see them, and of practice in ascribing synchronistic meaning to disconnected events.

Synchronicity is practically impossible to put to any kind of formal test, so the impasse between believers and skeptics is likely to persist for quite a while. Neither side can muster a genuinely compelling argument. The believers' "tests" are far too informal for

skeptics. Skeptics can't prove that the information isn't there, though -- they can only point out that its presence has not been proven. Neither side has the tools to convince the other.

Depending on the details of one's interpretation of synchronicity, it may or may not be appropriate to use automatic random oracles under a synchronistic interpretation. These are computer programs which shuffle the computerized cards or roll the digital dice themselves, with no opportunity for human intervention or for actual randomness.

Shuffling a physical deck of cards is a good approximation to a truly random process, because shuffling involves millions of variables few of whose values are known. Computers don't generate truly random numbers; they start with a "seed" number and perform complicated arithmetic transformations which turn it into another number, which becomes the seed for the next pass. The pseudo-random numbers generated by deterministic computer programs are not a good approximation to true randomness.

If your idea of synchronicity implies non-determinism through a chaotic process like shuffling, then automatic oracles are not for you. If your idea is a more all-embracing mystical notion, then complete automation should make no difference.

However, automatic oracles tend to be excessively distancing; the diviner does not feel involved in the process. For that reason, Tarot software should require manual influences on the fall of cards, much like physical shuffling. The user could, for instance, decide where to cut the deck, and the two stacks can then be riffled together. This brings the user into the process, and it should be compatible with any positive theory of divination.

Order From Chaos

The most skeptical assessment of divination holds that there really is no intrinsic meaning in an oracle. The cards just happen to fall a certain way, and no spirits, influences of the unconscious mind, or synchronistic factors put any information into their fall. The diviner is seeing ducks and horses in the clouds.

The straightforward application of this theory removes all motivation to perform divinations. Since there is no information in an oracle, divination is at best a waste of time.

However, skepticism and Tarot reading are not incompatible, though both skeptics and believers often assume otherwise. Modified skeptical positions hold that the process of attributing meaning to chaos can have positive effects, even though the meaning is merely an illusion in the mind.

Storytelling, for example, involves quasi-random factors in decisions on variables such as character attributes, settings, and plot structure. This would only be a problem if we failed to make a coherent story out of these decisions, or confused the story for reality.

A fiction writer might use the Tarot or other oracles for story guidance, while still convinced of the idea that the fall of cards is truly random. Similarly for other artists, but this approach is not confined to the arts. One might try to divine problems in one's real life under this theory, in hopes that adding information to the spread would lead to insights that would not have arisen through the unassisted thinking process.

Such a skeptical diviner would have total freedom to reject the reading, but believers in unconscious, synchronistic, or spiritualist theories of divination would not. If you believe that the spread really is meaningless, you are not bound to accept what it seems to say.

Another skeptical interpretation is that unconscious factors steer the process of interpretation -- not the fall of the cards, but the interpretation of their fall, a psychological process. Just as we do not decide consciously what to see in the clouds or in a Rorschach blot, we do not decide consciously what to see in a Tarot spread, but the outcome reveals something of our unconscious minds. We see patterns that we are unconsciously predisposed to see, and we learn about ourselves by revealing our predispositions.

Spirits of Wisdom

The most occult theory of the workings of divination is that the oracle is manipulated by spirits. The spirits may work through one's hands, or influence the oracle through more direct magical means such as telekinesis.

This leaves many questions open. What is the nature of the spirits? Are the spirits personal or universal? Why is it valuable to learn what they think about an issue? How do spirits manipulate the oracle? Why do they consent to being used in this fashion? Is there one general spirit per oracle, or a single ruler of all forms of divination, or do different spirits share responsibility over the same oracle, or is there one divinatory spirit per person?

All of these questions have any number of answers, so this entry can only give a shallow survey. Apologies are tendered to any theory which is underrepresented here.

One may take the approach favored by the more intolerant of the monotheistic factions. All spirits of magic are demons, that is, fallen angels. Different demons are delegated to divinations at the convenience of the infernal hierarchy. The oracle is manipulated through the powers which all angels, fallen or not, possess by virtue of their special creation by God. Demons are real spiritual personages having an objective existence in the spiritual world. They consent to being used by the diviner because the practice of divination leads to eternal damnation for the practitioner -- as do all magical practices not formally approved by the Bible and one's church. Demons earnestly desire that the living share the demons' misery in Hell, and divination is one way of bringing about this foul end.

A person accepting this model of divination would avoid all practices of divination beyond prayer to God and perhaps bibliomancy, the random selection of a verse from

the Bible. The idea that angels might manipulate Tarot cards is, of course, damnable heresy.

An equally anti-divinatory theory is the purely skeptical. Discorporate spirits are a traditional fantasy, and assuming their existence is nothing more than self-delusion.

There is a more moderate skeptical view, known to many students of Western Magick, which is really a form of the Unconscious Mind theory. Spiritual beings are viewed as a metaphor for processes of the unconscious mind, which to some extent mimic the structure of the conscious mind and can be seen as "splinter intelligences". Spirits do exist in a sense, but they are strictly personal and even (after a fashion) mundane, being merely another class of psychological phenomenon. They cooperate in divination either because the conscious mind can compel them to do so, or because they understand that their own interests coincide with the overall interests of the psyche. That is, they are either controllable or benign.

A more occult form of the spirit theory holds that spirits are real entities of the spiritual world, but either benign or controllable in temperament, as above. They may influence the oracle either through control of the magician's hands, or through magical powers of some sort.

Most occult systems would hold that a single god (albeit with many names and forms) rules all divination, while each individual form of divination (Tarot, geomancy, I Ching, etc.) has its own ruling spirit or a class of related spirits, who are invoked or evoked for each divination. Thoth is a good choice for an overall spiritual patron of all forms of divination, while the spirits specific to each kind of divination usually go without individual names beyond "spirits of geomancy", etc., and the names of the particular signs of the oracle. Sometimes the classes of spirits are given names or attributes beyond the names and attributes of the system of divination; gnomes are said to rule geomancy, while Mercurial spirits are said to rule the Tarot.

In an alternate occult formula, a specific spirit may be invoked or evoked for a particular act of divination, its identity being harmonious with the nature of the question or problem. A Martial spirit might be evoked to answer a question pertaining to conflict. However, the nature of the spirit must be suited not only to the question but to the oracle. It would do little good to evoke a Mercurial spirit to answer with geomancy, an essentially earthy oracle; nor to evoke an elemental to answer a question through the lofty and abstract I Ching.

Whatever the form of the spirit theory, one should note that it is not without danger. In fact, divination itself is somewhat dangerous, regardless of the theory. For this reason, it is probably wise to perform some simple protective spell (such as the Pentagram Ritual) before any act of divination, to keep out malign spirits and influences and encourage benign ones; or even just to give a feeling of greater security. This is also a useful technique in combination with the theory of the unconscious mind, so as to banish self-destructive influences.

A short prayer to the god of divination (e.g., Tahuti) would be effective, or a casting of the wards as in traditional occult practice. One need not be unskeptical to recognize the psychological benefits of working in a symbolically cleansed environment.

Here is an adaptation of a traditional Golden Dawn preparatory prayer or spell, suited to the use of the electronic diviner. Touch the side of the computer with the left hand, and hold the wand upright in the right, or hold the right hand in the classic gesture of consecration (first and second fingers upright, ring finger and pinky curled lightly toward the palm), and say:

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Magical Alphabet

Divination delivers information from some source to the conscious mind. To accomplish this, any oracle must communicate in some more or less intelligible language.

Looked at another way, any systematic oracle is a language in itself. By various combinations of the symbols of this language, all manner of things may be communicated.

This sort of language, such as the language of the Tarot or the Kabala, is sometimes referred to as a magical alphabet.

That a magical alphabet is invariably vague is its chief objection among skeptics. The argument is that since the symbols of various oracles are so diffuse, there is no real evidence that they communicate anything -- all the meaning is built up in the mind from the random outcome of the oracle, and various tactics of "cold reading" are used to add a layer of apparent meaning. This theory is addressed under Order from Chaos.

The symbols of a magical alphabet are worthy subjects for meditation. Aleister Crowley held that reading Tarot cards in oracles is a lower method than simple meditation on their meaning. R. G. H. Siu said the same of the I Ching, even declining to give the instructions for divination, which had to be added in a publisher's preface. However, divination may, as Crowley also suggested, be the best way to learn the alphabet.

Reader & Querent

In traditional Tarot divination, there is a reader and a querent. The reader acts as a consultant on the Tarot, using it to illuminate an issue for the querent. The reader typically charges a small fee for this service. Some sources insist that a reader is necessary; otherwise, the prejudices of the querent will dominate the reading. Cynics might point out that this insistence is of financial value to people who derive income from reading Tarot cards.

The way to structure a two-person reading depends on the theory. In all cases, the querent asks the question and the reader interprets the fall of the cards. The fall of the cards is determined by shuffling, which may be a joint process, or it may be done entirely by the reader or by the querent.

If the theory of unconscious determination is used, then the reader should shuffle the cards, though the querent may cut them to feel more involved with the process. The reader should watch the cut carefully so the necessary information may be transmitted to the unconscious mind. The reader is skilled in determining the fall of the cards; the querent is not.

If the synchronicity theory is used, then the querent or the reader may shuffle the cards. It makes no difference, since the synchronistic meaning comes through purely random factors.

If the theory of spirits is used, then again the reader should shuffle, since ordinary people do not particularly want to channel spirits to get a Tarot reading. If they wanted to get their hands that wet, they would probably do the divination themselves. Again, having the querent cut the deck is a meaningless symbol of involvement, but the spirits arrange the deck after the querent cuts it.

If the theory of order from chaos is used, it makes no difference who or what shuffles, just as with synchronicity.

Telling the Future

The popular view of Tarot cards is that they "tell the future". That is the meaning of the popular synonym for divination, "fortune-telling". Any sort of question may be asked of the Tarot cards, which does not exclude telling the future. But that is not the only end to which the cards may be put.

When telling the future, the questions of predestination and psychic powers inevitably arise. If we can accurately read the future, then the future must already exist in some sense, and we must have some way of viewing it.

On the question of predestination, science and philosophy are inconclusive. Modern physics is clear that the world is not deterministic; there are many experiments with physics on a small scale that show nature to be probabilistic. Many things happen on the sub-atomic scale without any real reason, simply because it was more or less likely that they would happen and they wound up happening or not. This would seem to fly in the face of predestination; the future state of the universe depends on truly random and unpredictable events.

But these events may be truly random yet, in a sense, already have happened. Time may be viewed as a fourth dimension like our usual three spatial dimensions. If so, then one may take a static view of the universe's history, in which the whole of time is a static

construct when viewed from without, that is, from a five-dimensional perspective. The exact nature of the "arrow of time" has yet to be clearly determined, and it is impossible to say now whether a higher-dimensional traveller would see the past as still with us and the future as already laid out.

The question of psychic powers is even more difficult. No such powers have ever been shown to exist in any replicable experiment; at best, such experiments barely squeak in under the margin of significance, and then only after averaging thousands of trials which are not individually significant.

Yet many people believe in them regardless, and these people erect theories to explain them. One of the more popular theoretical ideas of psychic powers is that the psyche somehow exists in a higher dimension. From a higher-dimensional viewpoint it might be possible to look out over the four-dimensional history of the world and see what is to come.

This is written in 1990 in San Francisco, and it seems rather telling to this writer that of the great events which have taken place recently -- the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the independence of Eastern Europe, the San Francisco earthquake -- none were foretold by psychics. One would think such momentous happenings would fairly blaze forth before a psychic eye, yet they didn't.

It is probably best to use a weaker form of the precognition idea, which does not involve a predestined future or psychic powers. Instead, the unconscious mind is viewed as having the power to perceive more or less where some events are heading, and to present its views on the subject -- which may be right or wrong -- through a Tarot reading. Of course, the conscious mind can also make some predictions based on its knowledge. The idea is that the unconscious mind is attentive to different factors and will make predictions the conscious mind could not.

Another "weak" form of precognition involves synchronicity. Events and Tarot readings are "riding the same waves", so one can cast light on the other.

Finally, it is best to take all answers about the future with a grain of salt. It is also wise to phrase questions in such a way that they ask for perspectives on what is happening and what has happened, and for guidance, rather than for outright predictions of the future.

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Theory of Divination

by Tim Maroney (1990)

"Divination" is the production of information by magical, occult, or supernatural means.

Tarot cards, I Ching, astrology, and the other well-known oracles are forms of divination.

Many other forms of divination are known, such as the prophecy of the Pythoness at

the ancient shrine of Apollo at Delphi; oneiromancy or dream interpretation; geomancy, divination by making dots in a tray of sand; bibliomancy, flipping randomly to a passage in a book (usually the Bible); chiromancy or palm-reading; necromancy, communing with dead souls; pyromancy or divination by flames; crytallomancy or crystal-gazing; ornithomancy, interpretation of the flights and cries of birds; and, of course, the Tibetan milk-bottle method of Special Agent Dale Cooper.

There are numerous theories of how divination works, or does not work. I will attempt to present a reasonably objective survey of the theories, not neglecting the most skeptical or farfetched.

The discussion is general and need not be taken as applying strictly to the Tarot. Some of the theories apply only to methods of divination which are manually controlled by the diviner, but other theories apply equally well to all methods.

Sub-Topics:

Unconscious Mind

Synchronicity

Order from Chaos

Spirits of Wisdom

Magical Alphabet

Reader & Querent

Telling the Future

Unconscious Mind

Where does the information of divination come from? One answer is that it comes from the unconscious portions of the human mind.

The unconscious mind is composed of all those parts of the mind which are active but which are not apparent to the conscious, speaking parts of the mind. The unconscious was a mainstay of the psychoanalytic theories popular early in the twentieth century, but it has survived the collapse of those pre-scientific theories. It now appears in some modern cognitive and neurological theories of the psyche. After all, it's obvious that there is a great deal of information processing of which we are unaware.

The theory of divination by the unconscious mind is plainly applicable to some forms of divination, such as dream interpretation and the oracle at Delphi, but the theory is not as clear with respect to manual oracles, such as Tarot cards, the I Ching, and geomancy. How does the information travel from the unconscious mind to the hands, or to the interpretation?

One of the common answers bears on the theory of Order from Chaos. This answer holds that the patterns generated by a manual oracle are truly random. All the information is created by the mind struggling to make order out of the oracular chaos. In this version of "Order from Chaos", the emerging pattern is assumed to come from the unconscious mind, and so to provide a "window" into the unconscious. A Tarot spread is

a sort of Rorschach blot.

Another popular answer says that perhaps the unconscious mind determines the physical result of the oracle. The unconscious is supposed to be watching the diviner's progress very carefully and controlling the motions of the diviner's hands so that the oracle takes a particular shape. Whether this can actually happen has not been subjected to rigorous experiment.

Finally, the unconscious mind may use psychic powers of some kind to shape the oracle; for instance, telekinesis, or perhaps the manipulation of probabilities. No such psychic powers have ever been shown to exist, but it is an attractive theory to many people, and in practice it is probably the most popular version of the theory of the unconscious mind.

In the theories of psychic powers or unconscious determination, note the effects of practice. The unconscious mind is no more infallible than the conscious mind, so the more spreads it performs, the less chance it has of flubbing the shuffle.

The question remains of why we would want to contact the unconscious mind at all.

The most common view in occult or parapsychological circles is that the unconscious mind is the repository of immense wisdom, perhaps through contact with divine beings, the ultimate ground of being, the higher self, or psychic powers.

A more mundane psychological justification is that the conscious and unconscious minds can be considered excessively separated, or even at odds. In some psychological theories of transformation the goal is to bring the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind closer to each other, so that the whole mind may function more harmoniously. An oracular practice might be effective in teaching the two minds to work together and to respect each others' interests.

The most mundane answer says that two heads are better than one. The unconsciousness is no better or worse than the consciousness, and there is no special merit from bringing the two closer as a process of self-transformation. But just as it is valuable to discuss problems with someone else (depending, of course, on the other person -- this principle should not encourage you to pester Manuel Noriega or Tammy Faye Bakker with your problems), so it is valuable to see what the unconscious mind thinks about issues. It may be right or wrong, but a more rounded perspective will likely result from hearing its side.

In either of the more mundane answers -- perhaps even in the occult one -- it is important to note that one is not opening a doorway into Absolute Truth. One is merely learning how the unconscious mind feels about the issue. So, a reading of success or failure would not necessarily show that an endeavor really was so fated. It would show only that the unconscious mind was of an optimistic or pessimistic opinion.

Synchronicity

Synchronicity is a parapsychological concept usually attributed to the psychotherapist Carl Jung. Jung called it "an acausal connecting principle"; that is, apparently separate events are meaningfully connected by synchronicity, outside the normal laws of cause and effect. In Tarot, the seemingly unconnected events linked by synchronicity are the shuffling of the deck of cards on one hand, and the meaning which is incorporated in the fall of those cards on the other.

However, the root idea is far older than Jung. Synchronicity is the mystical idea that there are no accidents, or that every event is an interaction between God and the soul. No matter how arbitrary it may seem to be, each event actually contains spiritual meaning, and wisdom largely consists in unwinding this hidden meaning behind the surface of events.

Synchronicity is a common explanation of random oracles such as the Tarot, I Ching, tea leaves, and ornithomancy, or reading the flights of birds. The appearance of randomness is only an illusion caused by our blindness to ultimate spiritual reality. The "random" fall of Tarot cards actually contains acausally transmitted information, which the diviner unwinds and interprets.

Granting this idea, why is the synchronistic information worth finding? The answer lies in the occult theory of the universe, which ascribes divinity (personal or impersonal) to the invisible acausal world. As the Tarot spread and other quasi-random synchronistic phenomena partake strongly of the nature of this hidden world, they are imbued with its characteristics of wisdom and illumination. In this way they become links to higher intelligence.

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In traditional Tarot divination, there is a reader and a querent. The reader acts as a consultant on the Tarot, using it to illuminate an issue for the querent. The reader typically charges a small fee for this service. Some sources insist that a reader is necessary; otherwise, the prejudices of the querent will dominate the reading. Cynics might point out that this insistence is of financial value to people who derive income from reading Tarot cards.

The way to structure a two-person reading depends on the theory. In all cases, the querent asks the question and the reader interprets the fall of the cards. The fall of the cards is determined by shuffling, which may be a joint process, or it may be done

entirely by the reader or by the querent.

If the theory of unconscious determination is used, then the reader should shuffle the cards, though the querent may cut them to feel more involved with the process. The reader should watch the cut carefully so the necessary information may be transmitted to the unconscious mind. The reader is skilled in determining the fall of the cards; the querent is not.

If the synchronicity theory is used, then the querent or the reader may shuffle the cards. It makes no difference, since the synchronistic meaning comes through purely random factors.

If the theory of spirits is used, then again the reader should shuffle, since ordinary people do not particularly want to channel spirits to get a Tarot reading. If they wanted to get their hands that wet, they would probably do the divination themselves. Again, having the querent cut the deck is a meaningless symbol of involvement, but the spirits arrange the deck after the querent cuts it.

If the theory of order from chaos is used, it makes no difference who or what shuffles, just as with synchronicity.

Telling the Future

The popular view of Tarot cards is that they "tell the future". That is the meaning of the popular synonym for divination, "fortune-telling". Any sort of question may be asked of the Tarot cards, which does not exclude telling the future. But that is not the only end to which the cards may be put.

When telling the future, the questions of predestination and psychic powers inevitably arise. If we can accurately read the future, then the future must already exist in some sense, and we must have some way of viewing it.

On the question of predestination, science and philosophy are inconclusive. Modern physics is clear that the world is not deterministic; there are many experiments with physics on a small scale that show nature to be probabilistic. Many things happen on the sub-atomic scale without any real reason, simply because it was more or less likely that they would happen and they wound up happening or not. This would seem to fly in the face of predestination; the future state of the universe depends on truly random and unpredictable events.

But these events may be truly random yet, in a sense, already have happened. Time may be viewed as a fourth dimension like our usual three spatial dimensions. If so, then one may take a static view of the universe's history, in which the whole of time is a static construct when viewed from without, that is, from a five-dimensional perspective. The exact nature of the "arrow of time" has yet to be clearly determined, and it is impossible to say now whether a higher-dimensional traveller would see the past as still with us and the future as already laid out.

The question of psychic powers is even more difficult. No such powers have ever been shown to exist in any replicable experiment; at best, such experiments barely squeak in under the margin of significance, and then only after averaging thousands of trials which are not individually significant.

Yet many people believe in them regardless, and these people erect theories to explain them. One of the more popular theoretical ideas of psychic powers is that the psyche somehow exists in a higher dimension. From a higher-dimensional viewpoint it might be possible to look out over the four-dimensional history of the world and see what is to come.

This is written in 1990 in San Francisco, and it seems rather telling to this writer that of the great events which have taken place recently -- the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the independence of Eastern Europe, the San Francisco earthquake -- none were foretold by psychics. One would think such momentous happenings would fairly blaze forth before a psychic eye, yet they didn't.

It is probably best to use a weaker form of the precognition idea, which does not involve a predestined future or psychic powers. Instead, the unconscious mind is viewed as having the power to perceive more or less where some events are heading, and to present its views on the subject -- which may be right or wrong -- through a Tarot reading. Of course, the conscious mind can also make some predictions based on its knowledge. The idea is that the unconscious mind is attentive to different factors and will make predictions the conscious mind could not.

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Theory of Divination

by Tim Maroney (1990)

"Divination" is the production of information by magical, occult, or supernatural means. Tarot cards, I Ching, astrology, and the other well-known oracles are forms of divination.

Many other forms of divination are known, such as the prophecying of the Pythoness at the ancient shrine of Apollo at Delphi; oneiromancy or dream interpretation; geomancy, divination by making dots in a tray of sand; bibliomancy, flipping randomly to a passage in a book (usually the Bible); chiromancy or palm-reading; necromancy, communing with dead souls; pyromancy or divination by flames; crytallomancy or crystal-gazing;

ornithomancy, interpretation of the flights and cries of birds; and, of course, the Tibetan milk-bottle method of Special Agent Dale Cooper.

There are numerous theories of how divination works, or does not work. I will attempt to present a reasonably objective survey of the theories, not neglecting the most skeptical or farfetched.

The discussion is general and need not be taken as applying strictly to the Tarot. Some of the theories apply only to methods of divination which are manually controlled by the diviner, but other theories apply equally well to all methods.

Sub-Topics:

Unconscious Mind

Synchronicity

Order from Chaos

Spirits of Wisdom

Magical Alphabet

Reader & Querent

Telling the Future

Unconscious Mind

Where does the information of divination come from? One answer is that it comes from the unconscious portions of the human mind.

The unconscious mind is composed of all those parts of the mind which are active but which are not apparent to the conscious, speaking parts of the mind. The unconscious was a mainstay of the psychoanalytic theories popular early in the twentieth century, but it has survived the collapse of those pre-scientific theories. It now appears in some modern cognitive and neurological theories of the psyche. After all, it's obvious that there is a great deal of information processing of which we are unaware.

The theory of divination by the unconscious mind is plainly applicable to some forms of divination, such as dream interpretation and the oracle at Delphi, but the theory is not as clear with respect to manual oracles, such as Tarot cards, the I Ching, and geomancy. How does the information travel from the unconscious mind to the hands, or to the interpretation?

One of the common answers bears on the theory of Order from Chaos. This answer holds that the patterns generated by a manual oracle are truly random. All the information is created by the mind struggling to make order out of the oracular chaos. In this version of "Order from Chaos", the emerging pattern is assumed to come from the unconscious mind, and so to provide a "window" into the unconscious. A Tarot spread is a sort of Rorschach blot.

Another popular answer says that perhaps the unconscious mind determines the physical result of the oracle. The unconscious is supposed to be watching the diviner's

progress very carefully and controlling the motions of the diviner's hands so that the oracle takes a particular shape. Whether this can actually happen has not been subjected to rigorous experiment.

Finally, the unconscious mind may use psychic powers of some kind to shape the oracle; for instance, telekinesis, or perhaps the manipulation of probabilities. No such psychic powers have ever been shown to exist, but it is an attractive theory to many people, and in practice it is probably the most popular version of the theory of the unconscious mind.

In the theories of psychic powers or unconscious determination, note the effects of practice. The unconscious mind is no more infallible than the conscious mind, so the more spreads it performs, the less chance it has of flubbing the shuffle.

The question remains of why we would want to contact the unconscious mind at all.

The most common view in occult or parapsychological circles is that the unconscious mind is the repository of immense wisdom, perhaps through contact with divine beings, the ultimate ground of being, the higher self, or psychic powers.

A more mundane psychological justification is that the conscious and unconscious minds can be considered excessively separated, or even at odds. In some psychological theories of transformation the goal is to bring the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind closer to each other, so that the whole mind may function more harmoniously. An oracular practice might be effective in teaching the two minds to work together and to respect each others' interests.

The most mundane answer says that two heads are better than one. The unconsciousness is no better or worse than the consciousness, and there is no special merit from bringing the two closer as a process of self-transformation. But just as it is valuable to discuss problems with someone else (depending, of course, on the other person -- this principle should not encourage you to pester Manuel Noriega or Tammy Faye Bakker with your problems), so it is valuable to see what the unconscious mind thinks about issues. It may be right or wrong, but a more rounded perspective will likely result from hearing its side.

In either of the more mundane answers -- perhaps even in the occult one -- it is important to note that one is not opening a doorway into Absolute Truth. One is merely learning how the unconscious mind feels about the issue. So, a reading of success or failure would not necessarily show that an endeavor really was so fated. It would show only that the unconscious mind was of an optimistic or pessimistic opinion.

Synchronicity

Synchronicity is a parapsychological concept usually attributed to the psychotherapist Carl Jung. Jung called it "an acausal connecting principle"; that is, apparently separate

events are meaningfully connected by synchronicity, outside the normal laws of cause and effect. In Tarot, the seemingly unconnected events linked by synchronicity are the shuffling of the deck of cards on one hand, and the meaning which is incorporated in the fall of those cards on the other.

However, the root idea is far older than Jung. Synchronicity is the mystical idea that there are no accidents, or that every event is an interaction between God and the soul. No matter how arbitrary it may seem to be, each event actually contains spiritual meaning, and wisdom largely consists in unwinding this hidden meaning behind the surface of events.

Synchronicity is a common explanation of random oracles such as the Tarot, I Ching, tea leaves, and ornithomancy, or reading the flights of birds. The appearance of randomness is only an illusion caused by our blindness to ultimate spiritual reality. The "random" fall of Tarot cards actually contains acausally transmitted information, which the diviner unwinds and interprets.

Granting this idea, why is the synchronistic information worth finding? The answer lies in the occult theory of the universe, which ascribes divinity (personal or impersonal) to the invisible acausal world. As the Tarot spread and other quasi-random synchronistic phenomena partake strongly of the nature of this hidden world, they are imbued with its characteristics of wisdom and illumination. In this way they become links to higher intelligence.

Synchronicity has been much in vogue in occultism for several decades. It is easy for anyone to verify that once they accept the principle of acausal connection, the number of apparent synchronicities increases to a remarkable degree.

Believers hold that this increase is a result of the soul becoming more attuned to God, or to its own true nature, or to the ultimate ground of reality, or to platypus people from Pluto (according to one UFO cult in New Jersey).

Skeptics hold that the increase in synchronicities is only a result of the desire to see them, and of practice in ascribing synchronistic meaning to disconnected events.

Synchronicity is practically impossible to put to any kind of formal test, so the impasse between believers and skeptics is likely to persist for quite a while. Neither side can muster a genuinely compelling argument. The believers' "tests" are far too informal for skeptics. Skeptics can't prove that the information isn't there, though -- they can only point out that its presence has not been proven. Neither side has the tools to convince the other.

Depending on the details of one's interpretation of synchronicity, it may or may not be appropriate to use automatic random oracles under a synchronistic interpretation. These are computer programs which shuffle the computerized cards or roll the digital dice themselves, with no opportunity for human intervention or for actual randomness.

Shuffling a physical deck of cards is a good approximation to a truly random process, because shuffling involves millions of variables few of whose values are known. Computers don't generate truly random numbers; they start with a "seed" number and perform complicated arithmetic transformations which turn it into another number, which becomes the seed for the next pass. The pseudo-random numbers generated by deterministic computer programs are not a good approximation to true randomness.

If your idea of synchronicity implies non-determinism through a chaotic process like shuffling, then automatic oracles are not for you. If your idea is a more all-embracing mystical notion, then complete automation should make no difference.

However, automatic oracles tend to be excessively distancing; the diviner does not feel involved in the process. For that reason, Tarot software should require manual influences on the fall of cards, much like physical shuffling. The user could, for instance, decide where to cut the deck, and the two stacks can then be riffled together. This brings the user into the process, and it should be compatible with any positive theory of divination.

Order From Chaos

The most skeptical assessment of divination holds that there really is no intrinsic meaning in an oracle. The cards just happen to fall a certain way, and no spirits, influences of the unconscious mind, or synchronistic factors put any information into their fall. The diviner is seeing ducks and horses in the clouds.

The straightforward application of this theory removes all motivation to perform divinations. Since there is no information in an oracle, divination is at best a waste of time.

However, skepticism and Tarot reading are not incompatible, though both skeptics and believers often assume otherwise. Modified skeptical positions hold that the process of attributing meaning to chaos can have positive effects, even though the meaning is merely an illusion in the mind.

Storytelling, for example, involves quasi-random factors in decisions on variables such as character attributes, settings, and plot structure. This would only be a problem if we failed to make a coherent story out of these decisions, or confused the story for reality.

A fiction writer might use the Tarot or other oracles for story guidance, while still convinced of the idea that the fall of cards is truly random. Similarly for other artists, but this approach is not confined to the arts. One might try to divine problems in one's real life under this theory, in hopes that adding information to the spread would lead to insights that would not have arisen through the unassisted thinking process.

Such a skeptical diviner would have total freedom to reject the reading, but believers in unconscious, synchronistic, or spiritualist theories of divination would not. If you believe

that the spread really is meaningless, you are not bound to accept what it seems to say.

Another skeptical interpretation is that unconscious factors steer the process of interpretation -- not the fall of the cards, but the interpretation of their fall, a psychological process. Just as we do not decide consciously what to see in the clouds or in a Rorschach blot, we do not decide consciously what to see in a Tarot spread, but the outcome reveals something of our unconscious minds. We see patterns that we are unconsciously predisposed to see, and we learn about ourselves by revealing our predispositions.

Spirits of Wisdom

The most occult theory of the workings of divination is that the oracle is manipulated by spirits. The spirits may work through one's hands, or influence the oracle through more direct magical means such as telekinesis.

This leaves many questions open. What is the nature of the spirits? Are the spirits personal or universal? Why is it valuable to learn what they think about an issue? How do spirits manipulate the oracle? Why do they consent to being used in this fashion? Is there one general spirit per oracle, or a single ruler of all forms of divination, or do different spirits share responsibility over the same oracle, or is there one divinatory spirit per person?

All of these questions have any number of answers, so this entry can only give a shallow survey. Apologies are tendered to any theory which is underrepresented here.

One may take the approach favored by the more intolerant of the monotheistic factions. All spirits of magic are demons, that is, fallen angels. Different demons are delegated to divinations at the convenience of the infernal hierarchy. The oracle is manipulated through the powers which all angels, fallen or not, possess by virtue of their special creation by God. Demons are real spiritual personages having an objective existence in the spiritual world. They consent to being used by the diviner because the practice of divination leads to eternal damnation for the practitioner -- as do all magical practices not formally approved by the Bible and one's church. Demons earnestly desire that the living share the demons' misery in Hell, and divination is one way of bringing about this foul end.

A person accepting this model of divination would avoid all practices of divination beyond prayer to God and perhaps bibliomancy, the random selection of a verse from the Bible. The idea that angels might manipulate Tarot cards is, of course, damnable heresy.

An equally anti-divinatory theory is the purely skeptical. Discorporate spirits are a traditional fantasy, and assuming their existence is nothing more than self-delusion.

There is a more moderate skeptical view, known to many students of Western Magick, which is really a form of the Unconscious Mind theory. Spiritual beings are viewed as a

metaphor for processes of the unconscious mind, which to some extent mimic the structure of the conscious mind and can be seen as "splinter intelligences". Spirits do exist in a sense, but they are strictly personal and even (after a fashion) mundane, being merely another class of psychological phenomenon. They cooperate in divination either because the conscious mind can compel them to do so, or because they understand that their own interests coincide with the overall interests of the psyche. That is, they are either controllable or benign.

A more occult form of the spirit theory holds that spirits are real entities of the spiritual world, but either benign or controllable in temperament, as above. They may influence the oracle either through control of the magician's hands, or through magical powers of some sort.

Most occult systems would hold that a single god (albeit with many names and forms) rules all divination, while each individual form of divination (Tarot, geomancy, I Ching, etc.) has its own ruling spirit or a class of related spirits, who are invoked or evoked for each divination. Thoth is a good choice for an overall spiritual patron of all forms of divination, while the spirits specific to each kind of divination usually go without individual names beyond "spirits of geomancy", etc., and the names of the particular signs of the oracle. Sometimes the classes of spirits are given names or attributes beyond the names and attributes of the system of divination; gnomes are said to rule geomancy, while Mercurial spirits are said to rule the Tarot.

In an alternate occult formula, a specific spirit may be invoked or evoked for a particular act of divination, its identity being harmonious with the nature of the question or problem. A Martial spirit might be evoked to answer a question pertaining to conflict. However, the nature of the spirit must be suited not only to the question but to the oracle. It would do little good to evoke a Mercurial spirit to answer with geomancy, an essentially earthy oracle; nor to evoke an elemental to answer a question through the lofty and abstract I Ching.

Whatever the form of the spirit theory, one should note that it is not without danger. In fact, divination itself is somewhat dangerous, regardless of the theory. For this reason, it is probably wise to perform some simple protective spell (such as the Pentagram Ritual) before any act of divination, to keep out malign spirits and influences and encourage benign ones; or even just to give a feeling of greater security. This is also a useful technique in combination with the theory of the unconscious mind, so as to banish self-destructive influences.

A short prayer to the god of divination (e.g., Tahuti) would be effective, or a casting of the wards as in traditional occult practice. One need not be unskeptical to recognize the psychological benefits of working in a symbolically cleansed environment.

Here is an adaptation of a traditional Golden Dawn preparatory prayer or spell, suited to the use of the electronic diviner. Touch the side of the computer with the left hand, and hold the wand upright in the right, or hold the right hand in the classic gesture of

consecration (first and second fingers upright, ring finger and pinky curled lightly toward the palm), and say:

I invoke thee, I A O, that thou wilt send Heru, the great Angel that is set over the operations of this Secret Wisdom, to lay his hand invisibly upon these crystal and copper thought-forms of art, that thereby we may obtain true knowledge of hidden things, to the glory of thine ineffable Name. Amen.

Magical Alphabet

Divination delivers information from some source to the conscious mind. To accomplish this, any oracle must communicate in some more or less intelligible language.

Looked at another way, any systematic oracle is a language in itself. By various combinations of the symbols of this language, all manner of things may be communicated.

This sort of language, such as the language of the Tarot or the Kabala, is sometimes referred to as a magical alphabet.

That a magical alphabet is invariably vague is its chief objection among skeptics. The argument is that since the symbols of various oracles are so diffuse, there is no real evidence that they communicate anything -- all the meaning is built up in the mind from the random outcome of the oracle, and various tactics of "cold reading" are used to add a layer of apparent meaning. This theory is addressed under Order from Chaos.

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Synchronicity

Synchronicity is a parapsychological concept usually attributed to the psychotherapist Carl Jung. Jung called it "an acausal connecting principle"; that is, apparently separate events are meaningfully connected by synchronicity, outside the normal laws of cause and effect. In Tarot, the seemingly unconnected events linked by synchronicity are the shuffling of the deck of cards on one hand, and the meaning which is incorporated in the fall of those cards on the other.

However, the root idea is far older than Jung. Synchronicity is the mystical idea that there are no accidents, or that every event is an interaction between God and the soul. No matter how arbitrary it may seem to be, each event actually contains spiritual meaning, and wisdom largely consists in unwinding this hidden meaning behind the surface of events.

Synchronicity is a common explanation of random oracles such as the Tarot, I Ching, tea leaves, and ornithomancy, or reading the flights of birds. The appearance of randomness is only an illusion caused by our blindness to ultimate spiritual reality. The "random" fall of Tarot cards actually contains acausally transmitted information, which the diviner unwinds and interprets.

Granting this idea, why is the synchronistic information worth finding? The answer lies in the occult theory of the universe, which ascribes divinity (personal or impersonal) to the invisible acausal world. As the Tarot spread and other quasi-random synchronistic phenomena partake strongly of the nature of this hidden world, they are imbued with its characteristics of wisdom and illumination. In this way they become links to higher intelligence.

Synchronicity has been much in vogue in occultism for several decades. It is easy for anyone to verify that once they accept the principle of acausal connection, the number of apparent synchronicities increases to a remarkable degree.

Believers hold that this increase is a result of the soul becoming more attuned to God, or to its own true nature, or to the ultimate ground of reality, or to platypus people from Pluto (according to one UFO cult in New Jersey).

Skeptics hold that the increase in synchronicities is only a result of the desire to see them, and of practice in ascribing synchronistic meaning to disconnected events.

Synchronicity is practically impossible to put to any kind of formal test, so the impasse between believers and skeptics is likely to persist for quite a while. Neither side can muster a genuinely compelling argument. The believers' "tests" are far too informal for skeptics. Skeptics can't prove that the information isn't there, though -- they can only point out that its presence has not been proven. Neither side has the tools to convince the other.

Depending on the details of one's interpretation of synchronicity, it may or may not be appropriate to use automatic random oracles under a synchronistic interpretation. These are computer programs which shuffle the computerized cards or roll the digital dice themselves, with no opportunity for human intervention or for actual randomness.

Shuffling a physical deck of cards is a good approximation to a truly random process, because shuffling involves millions of variables few of whose values are known. Computers don't generate truly random numbers; they start with a "seed" number and

perform complicated arithmetic transformations which turn it into another number, which becomes the seed for the next pass. The pseudo-random numbers generated by deterministic computer programs are not a good approximation to true randomness.

If your idea of synchronicity implies non-determinism through a chaotic process like shuffling, then automatic oracles are not for you. If your idea is a more all-embracing mystical notion, then complete automation should make no difference.

However, automatic oracles tend to be excessively distancing; the diviner does not feel involved in the process. For that reason, Tarot software should require manual influences on the fall of cards, much like physical shuffling. The user could, for instance, decide where to cut the deck, and the two stacks can then be riffled together. This brings the user into the process, and it should be compatible with any positive theory of divination.

Order From Chaos

The most skeptical assessment of divination holds that there really is no intrinsic meaning in an oracle. The cards just happen to fall a certain way, and no spirits, influences of the unconscious mind, or synchronistic factors put any information into their fall. The diviner is seeing ducks and horses in the clouds.

The straightforward application of this theory removes all motivation to perform divinations. Since there is no information in an oracle, divination is at best a waste of time.

However, skepticism and Tarot reading are not incompatible, though both skeptics and believers often assume otherwise. Modified skeptical positions hold that the process of attributing meaning to chaos can have positive effects, even though the meaning is merely an illusion in the mind.

Storytelling, for example, involves quasi-random factors in decisions on variables such as character attributes, settings, and plot structure. This would only be a problem if we failed to make a coherent story out of these decisions, or confused the story for reality.

A fiction writer might use the Tarot or other oracles for story guidance, while still convinced of the idea that the fall of cards is truly random. Similarly for other artists, but this approach is not confined to the arts. One might try to divine problems in one's real life under this theory, in hopes that adding information to the spread would lead to insights that would not have arisen through the unassisted thinking process.

Such a skeptical diviner would have total freedom to reject the reading, but believers in unconscious, synchronistic, or spiritualist theories of divination would not. If you believe that the spread really is meaningless, you are not bound to accept what it seems to say.

Another skeptical interpretation is that unconscious factors steer the process of interpretation -- not the fall of the cards, but the interpretation of their fall, a

psychological process. Just as we do not decide consciously what to see in the clouds or in a Rorschach blot, we do not decide consciously what to see in a Tarot spread, but the outcome reveals something of our unconscious minds. We see patterns that we are unconsciously predisposed to see, and we learn about ourselves by revealing our predispositions.

Spirits of Wisdom

The most occult theory of the workings of divination is that the oracle is manipulated by spirits. The spirits may work through one's hands, or influence the oracle through more direct magical means such as telekinesis.

This leaves many questions open. What is the nature of the spirits? Are the spirits personal or universal? Why is it valuable to learn what they think about an issue? How do spirits manipulate the oracle? Why do they consent to being used in this fashion? Is there one general spirit per oracle, or a single ruler of all forms of divination, or do different spirits share responsibility over the same oracle, or is there one divinatory spirit per person?

All of these questions have any number of answers, so this entry can only give a shallow survey. Apologies are tendered to any theory which is underrepresented here.

One may take the approach favored by the more intolerant of the monotheistic factions. All spirits of magic are demons, that is, fallen angels. Different demons are delegated to divinations at the convenience of the infernal hierarchy. The oracle is manipulated through the powers which all angels, fallen or not, possess by virtue of their special creation by God. Demons are real spiritual personages having an objective existence in the spiritual world. They consent to being used by the diviner because the practice of divination leads to eternal damnation for the practitioner -- as do all magical practices not formally approved by the Bible and one's church. Demons earnestly desire that the living share the demons' misery in Hell, and divination is one way of bringing about this foul end.

A person accepting this model of divination would avoid all practices of divination beyond prayer to God and perhaps bibliomancy, the random selection of a verse from the Bible. The idea that angels might manipulate Tarot cards is, of course, damnable heresy.

An equally anti-divinatory theory is the purely skeptical. Discorporate spirits are a traditional fantasy, and assuming their existence is nothing more than self-delusion.

There is a more moderate skeptical view, known to many students of Western Magick, which is really a form of the Unconscious Mind theory. Spiritual beings are viewed as a metaphor for processes of the unconscious mind, which to some extent mimic the structure of the conscious mind and can be seen as "splinter intelligences". Spirits do exist in a sense, but they are strictly personal and even (after a fashion) mundane, being merely another class of psychological phenomenon. They cooperate in divination

either because the conscious mind can compel them to do so, or because they understand that their own interests coincide with the overall interests of the psyche. That is, they are either controllable or benign.

A more occult form of the spirit theory holds that spirits are real entities of the spiritual world, but either benign or controllable in temperament, as above. They may influence the oracle either through control of the magician's hands, or through magical powers of some sort.

Most occult systems would hold that a single god (albeit with many names and forms) rules all divination, while each individual form of divination (Tarot, geomancy, I Ching, etc.) has its own ruling spirit or a class of related spirits, who are invoked or evoked for each divination. Thoth is a good choice for an overall spiritual patron of all forms of divination, while the spirits specific to each kind of divination usually go without individual names beyond "spirits of geomancy", etc., and the names of the particular signs of the oracle. Sometimes the classes of spirits are given names or attributes beyond the names and attributes of the system of divination; gnomes are said to rule geomancy, while Mercurial spirits are said to rule the Tarot.

In an alternate occult formula, a specific spirit may be invoked or evoked for a particular act of divination, its identity being harmonious with the nature of the question or problem. A Martial spirit might be evoked to answer a question pertaining to conflict. However, the nature of the spirit must be suited not only to the question but to the oracle. It would do little good to evoke a Mercurial spirit to answer with geomancy, an essentially earthy oracle; nor to evoke an elemental to answer a question through the lofty and abstract I Ching.

Whatever the form of the spirit theory, one should note that it is not without danger. In fact, divination itself is somewhat dangerous, regardless of the theory. For this reason, it is probably wise to perform some simple protective spell (such as the Pentagram Ritual) before any act of divination, to keep out malignant spirits and influences and encourage benign ones; or even just to give a feeling of greater security. This is also a useful technique in combination with the theory of the unconscious mind, so as to banish self-destructive influences.

A short prayer to the god of divination (e.g., Tahuti) would be effective, or a casting of the wards as in traditional occult practice. One need not be unskeptical to recognize the psychological benefits of working in a symbolically cleansed environment.

Here is an adaptation of a traditional Golden Dawn preparatory prayer or spell, suited to the use of the electronic diviner. Touch the side of the computer with the left hand, and hold the wand upright in the right, or hold the right hand in the classic gesture of consecration (first and second fingers upright, ring finger and pinky curled lightly toward the palm), and say:

I invoke thee, I A O, that thou wilt send Heru, the great Angel that is set over the

operations of this Secret Wisdom, to lay his hand invisibly upon these crystal and copper thought-forms of art, that thereby we may obtain true knowledge of hidden things, to the glory of thine ineffable Name. Amen.

Magical Alphabet

Divination delivers information from some source to the conscious mind. To accomplish this, any oracle must communicate in some more or less intelligible language.

Looked at another way, any systematic oracle is a language in itself. By various combinations of the symbols of this language, all manner of things may be communicated.

This sort of language, such as the language of the Tarot or the Kabala, is sometimes referred to as a magical alphabet.

That a magical alphabet is invariably vague is its chief objection among skeptics. The argument is that since the symbols of various oracles are so diffuse, there is no real evidence that they communicate anything -- all the meaning is built up in the mind from the random outcome of the oracle, and various tactics of "cold reading" are used to add a layer of apparent meaning. This theory is addressed under Order from Chaos.

The symbols of a magical alphabet are worthy subjects for meditation. Aleister Crowley held that reading Tarot cards in oracles is a lower method than simple meditation on their meaning. R. G. H. Siu said the same of the I Ching, even declining to give the instructions for divination, which had to be added in a publisher's preface. However, divination may, as Crowley also suggested, be the best way to learn the alphabet.

Reader & Querent

In traditional Tarot divination, there is a reader and a querent. The reader acts as a consultant on the Tarot, using it to illuminate an issue for the querent. The reader typically charges a small fee for this service. Some sources insist that a reader is necessary; otherwise, the prejudices of the querent will dominate the reading. Cynics might point out that this insistence is of financial value to people who derive income from reading Tarot cards.

The way to structure a two-person reading depends on the theory. In all cases, the querent asks the question and the reader interprets the fall of the cards. The fall of the cards is determined by shuffling, which may be a joint process, or it may be done entirely by the reader or by the querent.

If the theory of unconscious determination is used, then the reader should shuffle the cards, though the querent may cut them to feel more involved with the process. The reader should watch the cut carefully so the necessary information may be transmitted to the unconscious mind. The reader is skilled in determining the fall of the cards; the querent is not.

If the synchronicity theory is used, then the querent or the reader may shuffle the cards. It makes no difference, since the synchronistic meaning comes through purely random factors.

If the theory of spirits is used, then again the reader should shuffle, since ordinary people do not particularly want to channel spirits to get a Tarot reading. If they wanted to get their hands that wet, they would probably do the divination themselves. Again, having the querent cut the deck is a meaningless symbol of involvement, but the spirits arrange the deck after the querent cuts it.

If the theory of order from chaos is used, it makes no difference who or what shuffles, just as with synchronicity.

Telling the Future

The popular view of Tarot cards is that they "tell the future". That is the meaning of the popular synonym for divination, "fortune-telling". Any sort of question may be asked of the Tarot cards, which does not exclude telling the future. But that is not the only end to which the cards may be put.

When telling the future, the questions of predestination and psychic powers inevitably arise. If we can accurately read the future, then the future must already exist in some sense, and we must have some way of viewing it.

On the question of predestination, science and philosophy are inconclusive. Modern physics is clear that the world is not deterministic; there are many experiments with physics on a small scale that show nature to be probabilistic. Many things happen on the sub-atomic scale without any real reason, simply because it was more or less likely that they would happen and they wound up happening or not. This would seem to fly in the face of predestination; the future state of the universe depends on truly random and unpredictable events.

But these events may be truly random yet, in a sense, already have happened. Time may be viewed as a fourth dimension like our usual three spatial dimensions. If so, then one may take a static view of the universe's history, in which the whole of time is a static construct when viewed from without, that is, from a five-dimensional perspective. The exact nature of the "arrow of time" has yet to be clearly determined, and it is impossible to say now whether a higher-dimensional traveller would see the past as still with us and the future as already laid out.

The question of psychic powers is even more difficult. No such powers have ever been shown to exist in any replicable experiment; at best, such experiments barely squeak in under the margin of significance, and then only after averaging thousands of trials which are not individually significant.

Yet many people believe in them regardless, and these people erect theories to explain them. One of the more popular theoretical ideas of psychic powers is that the psyche

somehow exists in a higher dimension. From a higher-dimensional viewpoint it might be possible to look out over the four-dimensional history of the world and see what is to come.

This is written in 1990 in San Francisco, and it seems rather telling to this writer that of the great events which have taken place recently -- the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the independence of Eastern Europe, the San Francisco earthquake -- none were foretold by psychics. One would think such momentous happenings would fairly blaze forth before a psychic eye, yet they didn't.

It is probably best to use a weaker form of the precognition idea, which does not involve a predestined future or psychic powers. Instead, the unconscious mind is viewed as having the power to perceive more or less where some events are heading, and to present its views on the subject -- which may be right or wrong -- through a Tarot reading. Of course, the conscious mind can also make some predictions based on its knowledge. The idea is that the unconscious mind is attentive to different factors and will make predictions the conscious mind could not.

Another "weak" form of precognition involves synchronicity. Events and Tarot readings are "riding the same waves", so one can cast light on the other.

Finally, it is best to take all answers about the future with a grain of salt. It is also wise to phrase questions in such a way that they ask for perspectives on what is happening and what has happened, and for guidance, rather than for outright predictions of the future.

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Theory of Divination

by Tim Maroney (1990)

"Divination" is the production of information by magical, occult, or supernatural means. Tarot cards, I Ching, astrology, and the other well-known oracles are forms of divination.

Many other forms of divination are known, such as the prophecy of the Pythoness at the ancient shrine of Apollo at Delphi; oneiromancy or dream interpretation; geomancy, divination by making dots in a tray of sand; bibliomancy, flipping randomly to a passage in a book (usually the Bible); chiromancy or palm-reading; necromancy, communing with dead souls; pyromancy or divination by flames; crytallomancy or crystal-gazing; ornithomancy, interpretation of the flights and cries of birds; and, of course, the Tibetan milk-bottle method of Special Agent Dale Cooper.

There are numerous theories of how divination works, or does not work. I will attempt to present a reasonably objective survey of the theories, not neglecting the most skeptical or farfetched.

The discussion is general and need not be taken as applying strictly to the Tarot. Some

of the theories apply only to methods of divination which are manually controlled by the diviner, but other theories apply equally well to all methods.

Sub-Topics:

Unconscious Mind

Synchronicity

Order from Chaos

Spirits of Wisdom

Magical Alphabet

Reader & Querent

Telling the Future

Unconscious Mind

Where does the information of divination come from? One answer is that it comes from the unconscious portions of the human mind.

The unconscious mind is composed of all those parts of the mind which are active but which are not apparent to the conscious, speaking parts of the mind. The unconscious was a mainstay of the psychoanalytic theories popular early in the twentieth century, but it has survived the collapse of those pre-scientific theories. It now appears in some modern cognitive and neurological theories of the psyche. After all, it's obvious that there is a great deal of information processing of which we are unaware.

The theory of divination by the unconscious mind is plainly applicable to some forms of divination, such as dream interpretation and the oracle at Delphi, but the theory is not as clear with respect to manual oracles, such as Tarot cards, the I Ching, and geomancy. How does the information travel from the unconscious mind to the hands, or to the interpretation?

One of the common answers bears on the theory of Order from Chaos. This answer holds that the patterns generated by a manual oracle are truly random. All the information is created by the mind struggling to make order out of the oracular chaos. In this version of "Order from Chaos", the emerging pattern is assumed to come from the unconscious mind, and so to provide a "window" into the unconscious. A Tarot spread is a sort of Rorschach blot.

Another popular answer says that perhaps the unconscious mind determines the physical result of the oracle. The unconscious is supposed to be watching the diviner's progress very carefully and controlling the motions of the diviner's hands so that the oracle takes a particular shape. Whether this can actually happen has not been subjected to rigorous experiment.

Finally, the unconscious mind may use psychic powers of some kind to shape the oracle; for instance, telekinesis, or perhaps the manipulation of probabilities. No such psychic powers have ever been shown to exist, but it is an attractive theory to many people, and in practice it is probably the most popular version of the theory of the

unconscious mind.

In the theories of psychic powers or unconscious determination, note the effects of practice. The unconscious mind is no more infallible than the conscious mind, so the more spreads it performs, the less chance it has of flubbing the shuffle.

The question remains of why we would want to contact the unconscious mind at all.

The most common view in occult or parapsychological circles is that the unconscious mind is the repository of immense wisdom, perhaps through contact with divine beings, the ultimate ground of being, the higher self, or psychic powers.

A more mundane psychological justification is that the conscious and unconscious minds can be considered excessively separated, or even at odds. In some psychological theories of transformation the goal is to bring the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind closer to each other, so that the whole mind may function more harmoniously. An oracular practice might be effective in teaching the two minds to work together and to respect each others' interests.

The most mundane answer says that two heads are better than one. The unconsciousness is no better or worse than the consciousness, and there is no special merit from bringing the two closer as a process of self-transformation. But just as it is valuable to discuss problems with someone else (depending, of course, on the other person -- this principle should not encourage you to pester Manuel Noriega or Tammy Faye Bakker with your problems), so it is valuable to see what the unconscious mind thinks about issues. It may be right or wrong, but a more rounded perspective will likely result from hearing its side.

In either of the more mundane answers -- perhaps even in the occult one -- it is important to note that one is not opening a doorway into Absolute Truth. One is merely learning how the unconscious mind feels about the issue. So, a reading of success or failure would not necessarily show that an endeavor really was so fated. It would show only that the unconscious mind was of an optimistic or pessimistic opinion.

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However, the root idea is far older than Jung. Synchronicity is the mystical idea that there are no accidents, or that every event is an interaction between God and the soul. No matter how arbitrary it may seem to be, each event actually contains spiritual

meaning, and wisdom largely consists in unwinding this hidden meaning behind the surface of events.

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A short prayer to the god of divination (e.g., Tahuti) would be effective, or a casting of the wards as in traditional occult practice. One need not be unskeptical to recognize the psychological benefits of working in a symbolically cleansed environment.

Here is an adaptation of a traditional Golden Dawn preparatory prayer or spell, suited to the use of the electronic diviner. Touch the side of the computer with the left hand, and hold the wand upright in the right, or hold the right hand in the classic gesture of consecration (first and second fingers upright, ring finger and pinky curled lightly toward the palm), and say:

I invoke thee, I A O, that thou wilt send Heru, the great Angel that is set over the operations of this Secret Wisdom, to lay his hand invisibly upon these crystal and copper thought-forms of art, that thereby we may obtain true knowledge of hidden things, to the glory of thine ineffable Name. Amen.

Magical Alphabet

Divination delivers information from some source to the conscious mind. To accomplish this, any oracle must communicate in some more or less intelligible language.

Looked at another way, any systematic oracle is a language in itself. By various combinations of the symbols of this language, all manner of things may be communicated.

This sort of language, such as the language of the Tarot or the Kabala, is sometimes referred to as a magical alphabet.

That a magical alphabet is invariably vague is its chief objection among skeptics. The argument is that since the symbols of various oracles are so diffuse, there is no real evidence that they communicate anything -- all the meaning is built up in the mind from the random outcome of the oracle, and various tactics of "cold reading" are used to add a layer of apparent meaning. This theory is addressed under Order from Chaos.

The symbols of a magical alphabet are worthy subjects for meditation. Aleister Crowley held that reading Tarot cards in oracles is a lower method than simple meditation on their meaning. R. G. H. Siu said the same of the I Ching, even declining to give the instructions for divination, which had to be added in a publisher's preface. However, divination may, as Crowley also suggested, be the best way to learn the alphabet.

Reader & Querent

In traditional Tarot divination, there is a reader and a querent. The reader acts as a consultant on the Tarot, using it to illuminate an issue for the querent. The reader typically charges a small fee for this service. Some sources insist that a reader is necessary; otherwise, the prejudices of the querent will dominate the reading. Cynics might point out that this insistence is of financial value to people who derive income from reading Tarot cards.

The way to structure a two-person reading depends on the theory. In all cases, the querent asks the question and the reader interprets the fall of the cards. The fall of the cards is determined by shuffling, which may be a joint process, or it may be done entirely by the reader or by the querent.

If the theory of unconscious determination is used, then the reader should shuffle the cards, though the querent may cut them to feel more involved with the process. The reader should watch the cut carefully so the necessary information may be transmitted to the unconscious mind. The reader is skilled in determining the fall of the cards; the querent is not.

If the synchronicity theory is used, then the querent or the reader may shuffle the cards. It makes no difference, since the synchronistic meaning comes through purely random factors.

If the theory of spirits is used, then again the reader should shuffle, since ordinary people do not particularly want to channel spirits to get a Tarot reading. If they wanted to get their hands that wet, they would probably do the divination themselves. Again, having the querent cut the deck is a meaningless symbol of involvement, but the spirits arrange the deck after the querent cuts it.

If the theory of order from chaos is used, it makes no difference who or what shuffles, just as with synchronicity.

Telling the Future

The popular view of Tarot cards is that they "tell the future". That is the meaning of the popular synonym for divination, "fortune-telling". Any sort of question may be asked of the Tarot cards, which does not exclude telling the future. But that is not the only end to which the cards may be put.

When telling the future, the questions of predestination and psychic powers inevitably arise. If we can accurately read the future, then the future must already exist in some sense, and we must have some way of viewing it.

On the question of predestination, science and philosophy are inconclusive. Modern physics is clear that the world is not deterministic; there are many experiments with physics on a small scale that show nature to be probabilistic. Many things happen on the sub-atomic scale without any real reason, simply because it was more or less likely that they would happen and they wound up happening or not. This would seem to fly in the face of predestination; the future state of the universe depends on truly random and unpredictable events.

But these events may be truly random yet, in a sense, already have happened. Time may be viewed as a fourth dimension like our usual three spatial dimensions. If so, then one may take a static view of the universe's history, in which the whole of time is a static construct when viewed from without, that is, from a five-dimensional perspective. The exact nature of the "arrow of time" has yet to be clearly determined, and it is impossible to say now whether a higher-dimensional traveller would see the past as still with us and the future as already laid out.

The question of psychic powers is even more difficult. No such powers have ever been shown to exist in any replicable experiment; at best, such experiments barely squeak in under the margin of significance, and then only after averaging thousands of trials which are not individually significant.

Yet many people believe in them regardless, and these people erect theories to explain them. One of the more popular theoretical ideas of psychic powers is that the psyche somehow exists in a higher dimension. From a higher-dimensional viewpoint it might be possible to look out over the four-dimensional history of the world and see what is to come.

This is written in 1990 in San Francisco, and it seems rather telling to this writer that of the great events which have taken place recently -- the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the independence of Eastern Europe, the San Francisco earthquake -- none were foretold by psychics. One would think such momentous happenings would fairly blaze forth before a psychic eye, yet they didn't.

It is probably best to use a weaker form of the precognition idea, which does not involve a predestined future or psychic powers. Instead, the unconscious mind is viewed as having the power to perceive more or less where some events are heading, and to present its views on the subject -- which may be right or wrong -- through a Tarot reading. Of course, the conscious mind can also make some predictions based on its knowledge. The idea is that the unconscious mind is attentive to different factors and will make predictions the conscious mind could not.

Another "weak" form of precognition involves synchronicity. Events and Tarot readings are "riding the same waves", so one can cast light on the other.

Finally, it is best to take all answers about the future with a grain of salt. It is also wise to phrase questions in such a way that they ask for perspectives on what is happening and what has happened, and for guidance, rather than for outright predictions of the future.

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Theory of Divination

by Tim Maroney (1990)

"Divination" is the production of information by magical, occult, or supernatural means. Tarot cards, I Ching, astrology, and the other well-known oracles are forms of divination.

Many other forms of divination are known, such as the prophesying of the Pythoness at the ancient shrine of Apollo at Delphi; oneiromancy or dream interpretation; geomancy, divination by making dots in a tray of sand; bibliomancy, flipping randomly to a passage in a book (usually the Bible); chiromancy or palm-reading; necromancy, communing with dead souls; pyromancy or divination by flames; crytallomancy or crystal-gazing; ornithomancy, interpretation of the flights and cries of birds; and, of course, the Tibetan milk-bottle method of Special Agent Dale Cooper.

There are numerous theories of how divination works, or does not work. I will attempt to present a reasonably objective survey of the theories, not neglecting the most skeptical or farfetched.

The discussion is general and need not be taken as applying strictly to the Tarot. Some of the theories apply only to methods of divination which are manually controlled by the diviner, but other theories apply equally well to all methods.

Sub-Topics:

Unconscious Mind
Synchronicity
Order from Chaos
Spirits of Wisdom
Magical Alphabet
Reader & Querent
Telling the Future
Unconscious Mind

Where does the information of divination come from? One answer is that it comes from the unconscious portions of the human mind.

The unconscious mind is composed of all those parts of the mind which are active but which are not apparent to the conscious, speaking parts of the mind. The unconscious was a mainstay of the psychoanalytic theories popular early in the twentieth century, but it has survived the collapse of those pre-scientific theories. It now appears in some modern cognitive and neurological theories of the psyche. After all, it's obvious that there is a great deal of information processing of which we are unaware.

The theory of divination by the unconscious mind is plainly applicable to some forms of divination, such as dream interpretation and the oracle at Delphi, but the theory is not as clear with respect to manual oracles, such as Tarot cards, the I Ching, and geomancy. How does the information travel from the unconscious mind to the hands, or to the interpretation?

One of the common answers bears on the theory of Order from Chaos. This answer holds that the patterns generated by a manual oracle are truly random. All the information is created by the mind struggling to make order out of the oracular chaos. In this version of "Order from Chaos", the emerging pattern is assumed to come from the unconscious mind, and so to provide a "window" into the unconscious. A Tarot spread is a sort of Rorschach blot.

Another popular answer says that perhaps the unconscious mind determines the physical result of the oracle. The unconscious is supposed to be watching the diviner's progress very carefully and controlling the motions of the diviner's hands so that the oracle takes a particular shape. Whether this can actually happen has not been subjected to rigorous experiment.

Finally, the unconscious mind may use psychic powers of some kind to shape the oracle; for instance, telekinesis, or perhaps the manipulation of probabilities. No such psychic powers have ever been shown to exist, but it is an attractive theory to many people, and in practice it is probably the most popular version of the theory of the unconscious mind.

In the theories of psychic powers or unconscious determination, note the effects of practice. The unconscious mind is no more infallible than the conscious mind, so the

more spreads it performs, the less chance it has of flubbing the shuffle.

The question remains of why we would want to contact the unconscious mind at all.

The most common view in occult or parapsychological circles is that the unconscious mind is the repository of immense wisdom, perhaps through contact with divine beings, the ultimate ground of being, the higher self, or psychic powers.

A more mundane psychological justification is that the conscious and unconscious minds can be considered excessively separated, or even at odds. In some psychological theories of transformation the goal is to bring the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind closer to each other, so that the whole mind may function more harmoniously. An oracular practice might be effective in teaching the two minds to work together and to respect each others' interests.

The most mundane answer says that two heads are better than one. The unconsciousness is no better or worse than the consciousness, and there is no special merit from bringing the two closer as a process of self-transformation. But just as it is valuable to discuss problems with someone else (depending, of course, on the other person -- this principle should not encourage you to pester Manuel Noriega or Tammy Faye Bakker with your problems), so it is valuable to see what the unconscious mind thinks about issues. It may be right or wrong, but a more rounded perspective will likely result from hearing its side.

In either of the more mundane answers -- perhaps even in the occult one -- it is important to note that one is not opening a doorway into Absolute Truth. One is merely learning how the unconscious mind feels about the issue. So, a reading of success or failure would not necessarily show that an endeavor really was so fated. It would show only that the unconscious mind was of an optimistic or pessimistic opinion.

Synchronicity

Synchronicity is a parapsychological concept usually attributed to the psychotherapist Carl Jung. Jung called it "an acausal connecting principle"; that is, apparently separate events are meaningfully connected by synchronicity, outside the normal laws of cause and effect. In Tarot, the seemingly unconnected events linked by synchronicity are the shuffling of the deck of cards on one hand, and the meaning which is incorporated in the fall of those cards on the other.

However, the root idea is far older than Jung. Synchronicity is the mystical idea that there are no accidents, or that every event is an interaction between God and the soul. No matter how arbitrary it may seem to be, each event actually contains spiritual meaning, and wisdom largely consists in unwinding this hidden meaning behind the surface of events.

Synchronicity is a common explanation of random oracles such as the Tarot, I Ching,

tea leaves, and ornithomancy, or reading the flights of birds. The appearance of randomness is only an illusion caused by our blindness to ultimate spiritual reality. The "random" fall of Tarot cards actually contains acausally transmitted information, which the diviner unwinds and interprets.

Granting this idea, why is the synchronistic information worth finding? The answer lies in the occult theory of the universe, which ascribes divinity (personal or impersonal) to the invisible acausal world. As the Tarot spread and other quasi-random synchronistic phenomena partake strongly of the nature of this hidden world, they are imbued with its characteristics of wisdom and illumination. In this way they become links to higher intelligence.

Synchronicity has been much in vogue in occultism for several decades. It is easy for anyone to verify that once they accept the principle of acausal connection, the number of apparent synchronicities increases to a remarkable degree.

Believers hold that this increase is a result of the soul becoming more attuned to God, or to its own true nature, or to the ultimate ground of reality, or to platypus people from Pluto (according to one UFO cult in New Jersey).

Skeptics hold that the increase in synchronicities is only a result of the desire to see them, and of practice in ascribing synchronistic meaning to disconnected events.

Synchronicity is practically impossible to put to any kind of formal test, so the impasse between believers and skeptics is likely to persist for quite a while. Neither side can muster a genuinely compelling argument. The believers' "tests" are far too informal for skeptics. Skeptics can't prove that the information isn't there, though -- they can only point out that its presence has not been proven. Neither side has the tools to convince the other.

Depending on the details of one's interpretation of synchronicity, it may or may not be appropriate to use automatic random oracles under a synchronistic interpretation. These are computer programs which shuffle the computerized cards or roll the digital dice themselves, with no opportunity for human intervention or for actual randomness.

Shuffling a physical deck of cards is a good approximation to a truly random process, because shuffling involves millions of variables few of whose values are known. Computers don't generate truly random numbers; they start with a "seed" number and perform complicated arithmetic transformations which turn it into another number, which becomes the seed for the next pass. The pseudo-random numbers generated by deterministic computer programs are not a good approximation to true randomness.

If your idea of synchronicity implies non-determinism through a chaotic process like shuffling, then automatic oracles are not for you. If your idea is a more all-embracing mystical notion, then complete automation should make no difference.

However, automatic oracles tend to be excessively distancing; the diviner does not feel involved in the process. For that reason, Tarot software should require manual influences on the fall of cards, much like physical shuffling. The user could, for instance, decide where to cut the deck, and the two stacks can then be riffled together. This brings the user into the process, and it should be compatible with any positive theory of divination.

Order From Chaos

The most skeptical assessment of divination holds that there really is no intrinsic meaning in an oracle. The cards just happen to fall a certain way, and no spirits, influences of the unconscious mind, or synchronistic factors put any information into their fall. The diviner is seeing ducks and horses in the clouds.

The straightforward application of this theory removes all motivation to perform divinations. Since there is no information in an oracle, divination is at best a waste of time.

However, skepticism and Tarot reading are not incompatible, though both skeptics and believers often assume otherwise. Modified skeptical positions hold that the process of attributing meaning to chaos can have positive effects, even though the meaning is merely an illusion in the mind.

Storytelling, for example, involves quasi-random factors in decisions on variables such as character attributes, settings, and plot structure. This would only be a problem if we failed to make a coherent story out of these decisions, or confused the story for reality.

A fiction writer might use the Tarot or other oracles for story guidance, while still convinced of the idea that the fall of cards is truly random. Similarly for other artists, but this approach is not confined to the arts. One might try to divine problems in one's real life under this theory, in hopes that adding information to the spread would lead to insights that would not have arisen through the unassisted thinking process.

Such a skeptical diviner would have total freedom to reject the reading, but believers in unconscious, synchronistic, or spiritualist theories of divination would not. If you believe that the spread really is meaningless, you are not bound to accept what it seems to say.

Another skeptical interpretation is that unconscious factors steer the process of interpretation -- not the fall of the cards, but the interpretation of their fall, a psychological process. Just as we do not decide consciously what to see in the clouds or in a Rorschach blot, we do not decide consciously what to see in a Tarot spread, but the outcome reveals something of our unconscious minds. We see patterns that we are unconsciously predisposed to see, and we learn about ourselves by revealing our predispositions.

Spirits of Wisdom

The most occult theory of the workings of divination is that the oracle is manipulated by

spirits. The spirits may work through one's hands, or influence the oracle through more direct magical means such as telekinesis.

This leaves many questions open. What is the nature of the spirits? Are the spirits personal or universal? Why is it valuable to learn what they think about an issue? How do spirits manipulate the oracle? Why do they consent to being used in this fashion? Is there one general spirit per oracle, or a single ruler of all forms of divination, or do different spirits share responsibility over the same oracle, or is there one divinatory spirit per person?

All of these questions have any number of answers, so this entry can only give a shallow survey. Apologies are tendered to any theory which is underrepresented here.

One may take the approach favored by the more intolerant of the monotheistic factions. All spirits of magic are demons, that is, fallen angels. Different demons are delegated to divinations at the convenience of the infernal hierarchy. The oracle is manipulated through the powers which all angels, fallen or not, possess by virtue of their special creation by God. Demons are real spiritual personages having an objective existence in the spiritual world. They consent to being used by the diviner because the practice of divination leads to eternal damnation for the practitioner -- as do all magical practices not formally approved by the Bible and one's church. Demons earnestly desire that the living share the demons' misery in Hell, and divination is one way of bringing about this foul end.

A person accepting this model of divination would avoid all practices of divination beyond prayer to God and perhaps bibliomancy, the random selection of a verse from the Bible. The idea that angels might manipulate Tarot cards is, of course, damnable heresy.

An equally anti-divinatory theory is the purely skeptical. Discorporate spirits are a traditional fantasy, and assuming their existence is nothing more than self-delusion.

There is a more moderate skeptical view, known to many students of Western Magick, which is really a form of the Unconscious Mind theory. Spiritual beings are viewed as a metaphor for processes of the unconscious mind, which to some extent mimic the structure of the conscious mind and can be seen as "splinter intelligences". Spirits do exist in a sense, but they are strictly personal and even (after a fashion) mundane, being merely another class of psychological phenomenon. They cooperate in divination either because the conscious mind can compel them to do so, or because they understand that their own interests coincide with the overall interests of the psyche. That is, they are either controllable or benign.

A more occult form of the spirit theory holds that spirits are real entities of the spiritual world, but either benign or controllable in temperament, as above. They may influence the oracle either through control of the magician's hands, or through magical powers of some sort.

Most occult systems would hold that a single god (albeit with many names and forms) rules all divination, while each individual form of divination (Tarot, geomancy, I Ching, etc.) has its own ruling spirit or a class of related spirits, who are invoked or evoked for each divination. Thoth is a good choice for an overall spiritual patron of all forms of divination, while the spirits specific to each kind of divination usually go without individual names beyond "spirits of geomancy", etc., and the names of the particular signs of the oracle. Sometimes the classes of spirits are given names or attributes beyond the names and attributes of the system of divination; gnomes are said to rule geomancy, while Mercurial spirits are said to rule the Tarot.

In an alternate occult formula, a specific spirit may be invoked or evoked for a particular act of divination, its identity being harmonious with the nature of the question or problem. A Martial spirit might be evoked to answer a question pertaining to conflict. However, the nature of the spirit must be suited not only to the question but to the oracle. It would do little good to evoke a Mercurial spirit to answer with geomancy, an essentially earthy oracle; nor to evoke an elemental to answer a question through the lofty and abstract I Ching.

Whatever the form of the spirit theory, one should note that it is not without danger. In fact, divination itself is somewhat dangerous, regardless of the theory. For this reason, it is probably wise to perform some simple protective spell (such as the Pentagram Ritual) before any act of divination, to keep out malign spirits and influences and encourage benign ones; or even just to give a feeling of greater security. This is also a useful technique in combination with the theory of the unconscious mind, so as to banish self-destructive influences.

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In the theories of psychic powers or unconscious determination, note the effects of practice. The unconscious mind is no more infallible than the conscious mind, so the more spreads it performs, the less chance it has of flubbing the shuffle.

The question remains of why we would want to contact the unconscious mind at all.

The most common view in occult or parapsychological circles is that the unconscious mind is the repository of immense wisdom, perhaps through contact with divine beings, the ultimate ground of being, the higher self, or psychic powers.

A more mundane psychological justification is that the conscious and unconscious minds can be considered excessively separated, or even at odds. In some psychological theories of transformation the goal is to bring the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind closer to each other, so that the whole mind may function more harmoniously. An oracular practice might be effective in teaching the two minds to work together and to respect each others' interests.

The most mundane answer says that two heads are better than one. The unconsciousness is no better or worse than the consciousness, and there is no special merit from bringing the two closer as a process of self-transformation. But just as it is valuable to discuss problems with someone else (depending, of course, on the other person -- this principle should not encourage you to pester Manuel Noriega or Tammy Faye Bakker with your problems), so it is valuable to see what the unconscious mind thinks about issues. It may be right or wrong, but a more rounded perspective will likely result from hearing its side.

In either of the more mundane answers -- perhaps even in the occult one -- it is important to note that one is not opening a doorway into Absolute Truth. One is merely learning how the unconscious mind feels about the issue. So, a reading of success or failure would not necessarily show that an endeavor really was so fated. It would show only that the unconscious mind was of an optimistic or pessimistic opinion.

Synchronicity

Synchronicity is a parapsychological concept usually attributed to the psychotherapist Carl Jung. Jung called it "an acausal connecting principle"; that is, apparently separate events are meaningfully connected by synchronicity, outside the normal laws of cause and effect. In Tarot, the seemingly unconnected events linked by synchronicity are the shuffling of the deck of cards on one hand, and the meaning which is incorporated in the fall of those cards on the other.

However, the root idea is far older than Jung. Synchronicity is the mystical idea that there are no accidents, or that every event is an interaction between God and the soul. No matter how arbitrary it may seem to be, each event actually contains spiritual meaning, and wisdom largely consists in unwinding this hidden meaning behind the surface of events.

Synchronicity is a common explanation of random oracles such as the Tarot, I Ching, tea leaves, and ornithomancy, or reading the flights of birds. The appearance of randomness is only an illusion caused by our blindness to ultimate spiritual reality. The "random" fall of Tarot cards actually contains acausally transmitted information, which the diviner unwinds and interprets.

Granting this idea, why is the synchronistic information worth finding? The answer lies in the occult theory of the universe, which ascribes divinity (personal or impersonal) to the invisible acausal world. As the Tarot spread and other quasi-random synchronistic phenomena partake strongly of the nature of this hidden world, they are imbued with its characteristics of wisdom and illumination. In this way they become links to higher intelligence.

Synchronicity has been much in vogue in occultism for several decades. It is easy for anyone to verify that once they accept the principle of acausal connection, the number of apparent synchronicities increases to a remarkable degree.

Believers hold that this increase is a result of the soul becoming more attuned to God, or to its own true nature, or to the ultimate ground of reality, or to platypus people from Pluto (according to one UFO cult in New Jersey).

Skeptics hold that the increase in synchronicities is only a result of the desire to see them, and of practice in ascribing synchronistic meaning to disconnected events.

Synchronicity is practically impossible to put to any kind of formal test, so the impasse between believers and skeptics is likely to persist for quite a while. Neither side can muster a genuinely compelling argument. The believers' "tests" are far too informal for skeptics. Skeptics can't prove that the information isn't there, though -- they can only point out that its presence has not been proven. Neither side has the tools to convince the other.

Depending on the details of one's interpretation of synchronicity, it may or may not be appropriate to use automatic random oracles under a synchronistic interpretation. There are computer programs which shuffle the computerized cards or roll the digital dice themselves, with no opportunity for human intervention or for actual randomness.

Shuffling a physical deck of cards is a good approximation to a truly random process, because shuffling involves millions of variables few of whose values are known. Computers don't generate truly random numbers; they start with a "seed" number and perform complicated arithmetic transformations which turn it into another number, which becomes the seed for the next pass. The pseudo-random numbers generated by deterministic computer programs are not a good approximation to true randomness.

If your idea of synchronicity implies non-determinism through a chaotic process like shuffling, then automatic oracles are not for you. If your idea is a more all-embracing mystical notion, then complete automation should make no difference.

However, automatic oracles tend to be excessively distancing; the diviner does not feel involved in the process. For that reason, Tarot software should require manual influences on the fall of cards, much like physical shuffling. The user could, for instance, decide where to cut the deck, and the two stacks can then be riffled together. This

brings the user into the process, and it should be compatible with any positive theory of divination.

Order From Chaos

The most skeptical assessment of divination holds that there really is no intrinsic meaning in an oracle. The cards just happen to fall a certain way, and no spirits, influences of the unconscious mind, or synchronistic factors put any information into their fall. The diviner is seeing ducks and horses in the clouds.

The straightforward application of this theory removes all motivation to perform divinations. Since there is no information in an oracle, divination is at best a waste of time.

However, skepticism and Tarot reading are not incompatible, though both skeptics and believers often assume otherwise. Modified skeptical positions hold that the process of attributing meaning to chaos can have positive effects, even though the meaning is merely an illusion in the mind.

Storytelling, for example, involves quasi-random factors in decisions on variables such as character attributes, settings, and plot structure. This would only be a problem if we failed to make a coherent story out of these decisions, or confused the story for reality.

A fiction writer might use the Tarot or other oracles for story guidance, while still convinced of the idea that the fall of cards is truly random. Similarly for other artists, but this approach is not confined to the arts. One might try to divine problems in one's real life under this theory, in hopes that adding information to the spread would lead to insights that would not have arisen through the unassisted thinking process.

Such a skeptical diviner would have total freedom to reject the reading, but believers in unconscious, synchronistic, or spiritualist theories of divination would not. If you believe that the spread really is meaningless, you are not bound to accept what it seems to say.

Another skeptical interpretation is that unconscious factors steer the process of interpretation -- not the fall of the cards, but the interpretation of their fall, a psychological process. Just as we do not decide consciously what to see in the clouds or in a Rorschach blot, we do not decide consciously what to see in a Tarot spread, but the outcome reveals something of our unconscious minds. We see patterns that we are unconsciously predisposed to see, and we learn about ourselves by revealing our predispositions.

Spirits of Wisdom

The most occult theory of the workings of divination is that the oracle is manipulated by spirits. The spirits may work through one's hands, or influence the oracle through more direct magical means such as telekinesis.

This leaves many questions open. What is the nature of the spirits? Are the spirits

personal or universal? Why is it valuable to learn what they think about an issue? How do spirits manipulate the oracle? Why do they consent to being used in this fashion? Is there one general spirit per oracle, or a single ruler of all forms of divination, or do different spirits share responsibility over the same oracle, or is there one divinatory spirit per person?

All of these questions have any number of answers, so this entry can only give a shallow survey. Apologies are tendered to any theory which is underrepresented here.

One may take the approach favored by the more intolerant of the monotheistic factions. All spirits of magic are demons, that is, fallen angels. Different demons are delegated to divinations at the convenience of the infernal hierarchy. The oracle is manipulated through the powers which all angels, fallen or not, possess by virtue of their special creation by God. Demons are real spiritual personages having an objective existence in the spiritual world. They consent to being used by the diviner because the practice of divination leads to eternal damnation for the practitioner -- as do all magical practices not formally approved by the Bible and one's church. Demons earnestly desire that the living share the demons' misery in Hell, and divination is one way of bringing about this foul end.

A person accepting this model of divination would avoid all practices of divination beyond prayer to God and perhaps bibliomancy, the random selection of a verse from the Bible. The idea that angels might manipulate Tarot cards is, of course, damnable heresy.

An equally anti-divinatory theory is the purely skeptical. Discorporate spirits are a traditional fantasy, and assuming their existence is nothing more than self-delusion.

There is a more moderate skeptical view, known to many students of Western Magick, which is really a form of the Unconscious Mind theory. Spiritual beings are viewed as a metaphor for processes of the unconscious mind, which to some extent mimic the structure of the conscious mind and can be seen as "splinter intelligences". Spirits do exist in a sense, but they are strictly personal and even (after a fashion) mundane, being merely another class of psychological phenomenon. They cooperate in divination either because the conscious mind can compel them to do so, or because they understand that their own interests coincide with the overall interests of the psyche. That is, they are either controllable or benign.

A more occult form of the spirit theory holds that spirits are real entities of the spiritual world, but either benign or controllable in temperament, as above. They may influence the oracle either through control of the magician's hands, or through magical powers of some sort.

Most occult systems would hold that a single god (albeit with many names and forms) rules all divination, while each individual form of divination (Tarot, geomancy, I Ching, etc.) has its own ruling spirit or a class of related spirits, who are invoked or evoked for

each divination. Thoth is a good choice for an overall spiritual patron of all forms of divination, while the spirits specific to each kind of divination usually go without individual names beyond "spirits of geomancy", etc., and the names of the particular signs of the oracle. Sometimes the classes of spirits are given names or attributes beyond the names and attributes of the system of divination; gnomes are said to rule geomancy, while Mercurial spirits are said to rule the Tarot.

In an alternate occult formula, a specific spirit may be invoked or evoked for a particular act of divination, its identity being harmonious with the nature of the question or problem. A Martial spirit might be evoked to answer a question pertaining to conflict. However, the nature of the spirit must be suited not only to the question but to the oracle. It would do little good to evoke a Mercurial spirit to answer with geomancy, an essentially earthy oracle; nor to evoke an elemental to answer a question through the lofty and abstract I Ching.

Whatever the form of the spirit theory, one should note that it is not without danger. In fact, divination itself is somewhat dangerous, regardless of the theory. For this reason, it is probably wise to perform some simple protective spell (such as the Pentagram Ritual) before any act of divination, to keep out malign spirits and influences and encourage benign ones; or even just to give a feeling of greater security. This is also a useful technique in combination with the theory of the unconscious mind, so as to banish self-destructive influences.

A short prayer to the god of divination (e.g., Tahuti) would be effective, or a casting of the wards as in traditional occult practice. One need not be unskeptical to recognize the psychological benefits of working in a symbolically cleansed environment.

Here is an adaptation of a traditional Golden Dawn preparatory prayer or spell, suited to the use of the electronic diviner. Touch the side of the computer with the left hand, and hold the wand upright in the right, or hold the right hand in the classic gesture of consecration (first and second fingers upright, ring finger and pinky curled lightly toward the palm), and say:

I invoke thee, I A O, that thou wilt send Heru, the great Angel that is set over the operations of this Secret Wisdom, to lay his hand invisibly upon these crystal and copper thought-forms of art, that thereby we may obtain true knowledge of hidden things, to the glory of thine ineffable Name. Amen.

Magical Alphabet

Divination delivers information from some source to the conscious mind. To accomplish this, any oracle must communicate in some more or less intelligible language.

Looked at another way, any systematic oracle is a language in itself. By various combinations of the symbols of this language, all manner of things may be communicated.

This sort of language, such as the language of the Tarot or the Kabala, is sometimes referred to as a magical alphabet.

That a magical alphabet is invariably vague is its chief objection among skeptics. The argument is that since the symbols of various oracles are so diffuse, there is no real evidence that they communicate anything -- all the meaning is built up in the mind from the random outcome of the oracle, and various tactics of "cold reading" are used to add a layer of apparent meaning. This theory is addressed under Order from Chaos.

The symbols of a magical alphabet are worthy subjects for meditation. Aleister Crowley held that reading Tarot cards in oracles is a lower method than simple meditation on their meaning. R. G. H. Siu said the same of the I Ching, even declining to give the instructions for divination, which had to be added in a publisher's preface. However, divination may, as Crowley also suggested, be the best way to learn the alphabet.

Reader & Querent

In traditional Tarot divination, there is a reader and a querent. The reader acts as a consultant on the Tarot, using it to illuminate an issue for the querent. The reader typically charges a small fee for this service. Some sources insist that a reader is necessary; otherwise, the prejudices of the querent will dominate the reading. Cynics might point out that this insistence is of financial value to people who derive income from reading Tarot cards.

The way to structure a two-person reading depends on the theory. In all cases, the querent asks the question and the reader interprets the fall of the cards. The fall of the cards is determined by shuffling, which may be a joint process, or it may be done entirely by the reader or by the querent.

If the theory of unconscious determination is used, then the reader should shuffle the cards, though the querent may cut them to feel more involved with the process. The reader should watch the cut carefully so the necessary information may be transmitted to the unconscious mind. The reader is skilled in determining the fall of the cards; the querent is not.

If the synchronicity theory is used, then the querent or the reader may shuffle the cards. It makes no difference, since the synchronistic meaning comes through purely random factors.

If the theory of spirits is used, then again the reader should shuffle, since ordinary people do not particularly want to channel spirits to get a Tarot reading. If they wanted to get their hands that wet, they would probably do the divination themselves. Again, having the querent cut the deck is a meaningless symbol of involvement, but the spirits arrange the deck after the querent cuts it.

If the theory of order from chaos is used, it makes no difference who or what shuffles, just as with synchronicity.

Telling the Future

The popular view of Tarot cards is that they "tell the future". That is the meaning of the popular synonym for divination, "fortune-telling". Any sort of question may be asked of the Tarot cards, which does not exclude telling the future. But that is not the only end to which the cards may be put.

When telling the future, the questions of predestination and psychic powers inevitably arise. If we can accurately read the future, then the future must already exist in some sense, and we must have some way of viewing it.

On the question of predestination, science and philosophy are inconclusive. Modern physics is clear that the world is not deterministic; there are many experiments with physics on a small scale that show nature to be probabilistic. Many things happen on the sub-atomic scale without any real reason, simply because it was more or less likely that they would happen and they wound up happening or not. This would seem to fly in the face of predestination; the future state of the universe depends on truly random and unpredictable events.

But these events may be truly random yet, in a sense, already have happened. Time may be viewed as a fourth dimension like our usual three spatial dimensions. If so, then one may take a static view of the universe's history, in which the whole of time is a static construct when viewed from without, that is, from a five-dimensional perspective. The exact nature of the "arrow of time" has yet to be clearly determined, and it is impossible to say now whether a higher-dimensional traveller would see the past as still with us and the future as already laid out.

The question of psychic powers is even more difficult. No such powers have ever been shown to exist in any replicable experiment; at best, such experiments barely squeak in under the margin of significance, and then only after averaging thousands of trials which are not individually significant.

Yet many people believe in them regardless, and these people erect theories to explain them. One of the more popular theoretical ideas of psychic powers is that the psyche somehow exists in a higher dimension. From a higher-dimensional viewpoint it might be possible to look out over the four-dimensional history of the world and see what is to come.

This is written in 1990 in San Francisco, and it seems rather telling to this writer that of the great events which have taken place recently -- the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the independence of Eastern Europe, the San Francisco earthquake -- none were foretold by psychics. One would think such momentous happenings would fairly blaze forth before a psychic eye, yet they didn't.

It is probably best to use a weaker form of the precognition idea, which does not involve a predestined future or psychic powers. Instead, the unconscious mind is viewed as

having the power to perceive more or less where some events are heading, and to present its views on the subject -- which may be right or wrong -- through a Tarot reading. Of course, the conscious mind can also make some predictions based on its knowledge. The idea is that the unconscious mind is attentive to different factors and will make predictions the conscious mind could not.

Another "weak" form of precognition involves synchronicity. Events and Tarot readings are "riding the same waves", so one can cast light on the other.

Finally, it is best to take all answers about the future with a grain of salt. It is also wise to phrase questions in such a way that they ask for perspectives on what is happening and what has happened, and for guidance, rather than for outright predictions of the future.

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Theory of Divination

by Tim Maroney (1990)

"Divination" is the production of information by magical, occult, or supernatural means.

Tarot cards, I Ching, astrology, and the other well-known oracles are forms of divination.

Many other forms of divination are known, such as the prophecy of the Pythoness at the ancient shrine of Apollo at Delphi; oneiromancy or dream interpretation; geomancy, divination by making dots in a tray of sand; bibliomancy, flipping randomly to a passage in a book (usually the Bible); chiromancy or palm-reading; necromancy, communing with dead souls; pyromancy or divination by flames; crytallomancy or crystal-gazing; ornithomancy, interpretation of the flights and cries of birds; and, of course, the Tibetan milk-bottle method of Special Agent Dale Cooper.

There are numerous theories of how divination works, or does not work. I will attempt to present a reasonably objective survey of the theories, not neglecting the most skeptical or farfetched.

The discussion is general and need not be taken as applying strictly to the Tarot. Some of the theories apply only to methods of divination which are manually controlled by the diviner, but other theories apply equally well to all methods.

Sub-Topics:

Unconscious Mind

Synchronicity

Order from Chaos

Spirits of Wisdom

Magical Alphabet

Reader & Querent

Telling the Future

Unconscious Mind

Where does the information of divination come from? One answer is that it comes from the unconscious portions of the human mind.

The unconscious mind is composed of all those parts of the mind which are active but which are not apparent to the conscious, speaking parts of the mind. The unconscious was a mainstay of the psychoanalytic theories popular early in the twentieth century, but it has survived the collapse of those pre-scientific theories. It now appears in some modern cognitive and neurological theories of the psyche. After all, it's obvious that there is a great deal of information processing of which we are unaware.

The theory of divination by the unconscious mind is plainly applicable to some forms of divination, such as dream interpretation and the oracle at Delphi, but the theory is not as clear with respect to manual oracles, such as Tarot cards, the I Ching, and geomancy. How does the information travel from the unconscious mind to the hands, or to the interpretation?

One of the common answers bears on the theory of Order from Chaos. This answer holds that the patterns generated by a manual oracle are truly random. All the information is created by the mind struggling to make order out of the oracular chaos. In this version of "Order from Chaos", the emerging pattern is assumed to come from the unconscious mind, and so to provide a "window" into the unconscious. A Tarot spread is a sort of Rorschach blot.

Another popular answer says that perhaps the unconscious mind determines the physical result of the oracle. The unconscious is supposed to be watching the diviner's progress very carefully and controlling the motions of the diviner's hands so that the oracle takes a particular shape. Whether this can actually happen has not been subjected to rigorous experiment.

Finally, the unconscious mind may use psychic powers of some kind to shape the oracle; for instance, telekinesis, or perhaps the manipulation of probabilities. No such psychic powers have ever been shown to exist, but it is an attractive theory to many people, and in practice it is probably the most popular version of the theory of the unconscious mind.

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A more mundane psychological justification is that the conscious and unconscious minds can be considered excessively separated, or even at odds. In some psychological theories of transformation the goal is to bring the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind closer to each other, so that the whole mind may function more harmoniously. An oracular practice might be effective in teaching the two minds to work together and to respect each others' interests.

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However, the root idea is far older than Jung. Synchronicity is the mystical idea that there are no accidents, or that every event is an interaction between God and the soul. No matter how arbitrary it may seem to be, each event actually contains spiritual meaning, and wisdom largely consists in unwinding this hidden meaning behind the surface of events.

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A more occult form of the spirit theory holds that spirits are real entities of the spiritual world, but either benign or controllable in temperament, as above. They may influence the oracle either through control of the magician's hands, or through magical powers of some sort.

Most occult systems would hold that a single god (albeit with many names and forms) rules all divination, while each individual form of divination (Tarot, geomancy, I Ching, etc.) has its own ruling spirit or a class of related spirits, who are invoked or evoked for each divination. Thoth is a good choice for an overall spiritual patron of all forms of divination, while the spirits specific to each kind of divination usually go without individual names beyond "spirits of geomancy", etc., and the names of the particular signs of the oracle. Sometimes the classes of spirits are given names or attributes

beyond the names and attributes of the system of divination; gnomes are said to rule geomancy, while Mercurial spirits are said to rule the Tarot.

In an alternate occult formula, a specific spirit may be invoked or evoked for a particular act of divination, its identity being harmonious with the nature of the question or problem. A Martial spirit might be evoked to answer a question pertaining to conflict. However, the nature of the spirit must be suited not only to the question but to the oracle. It would do little good to evoke a Mercurial spirit to answer with geomancy, an essentially earthy oracle; nor to evoke an elemental to answer a question through the lofty and abstract I Ching.

Whatever the form of the spirit theory, one should note that it is not without danger. In fact, divination itself is somewhat dangerous, regardless of the theory. For this reason, it is probably wise to perform some simple protective spell (such as the Pentagram Ritual) before any act of divination, to keep out malign spirits and influences and encourage benign ones; or even just to give a feeling of greater security. This is also a useful technique in combination with the theory of the unconscious mind, so as to banish self-destructive influences.

A short prayer to the god of divination (e.g., Tahuti) would be effective, or a casting of the wards as in traditional occult practice. One need not be unskeptical to recognize the psychological benefits of working in a symbolically cleansed environment.

Here is an adaptation of a traditional Golden Dawn preparatory prayer or spell, suited to the use of the electronic diviner. Touch the side of the computer with the left hand, and hold the wand upright in the right, or hold the right hand in the classic gesture of consecration (first and second fingers upright, ring finger and pinky curled lightly toward the palm), and say:

I invoke thee, I A O, that thou wilt send Heru, the great Angel that is set over the operations of this Secret Wisdom, to lay his hand invisibly upon these crystal and copper thought-forms of art, that thereby we may obtain true knowledge of hidden things, to the glory of thine ineffable Name. Amen.

Magical Alphabet

Divination delivers information from some source to the conscious mind. To accomplish this, any oracle must communicate in some more or less intelligible language.

Looked at another way, any systematic oracle is a language in itself. By various combinations of the symbols of this language, all manner of things may be communicated.

This sort of language, such as the language of the Tarot or the Kabala, is sometimes referred to as a magical alphabet.

That a magical alphabet is invariably vague is its chief objection among skeptics. The

argument is that since the symbols of various oracles are so diffuse, there is no real evidence that they communicate anything -- all the meaning is built up in the mind from the random outcome of the oracle, and various tactics of "cold reading" are used to add a layer of apparent meaning. This theory is addressed under Order from Chaos.

The symbols of a magical alphabet are worthy subjects for meditation. Aleister Crowley held that reading Tarot cards in oracles is a lower method than simple meditation on their meaning. R. G. H. Siu said the same of the I Ching, even declining to give the instructions for divination, which had to be added in a publisher's preface. However, divination may, as Crowley also suggested, be the best way to learn the alphabet.

Reader & Querent

In traditional Tarot divination, there is a reader and a querent. The reader acts as a consultant on the Tarot, using it to illuminate an issue for the querent. The reader typically charges a small fee for this service. Some sources insist that a reader is necessary; otherwise, the prejudices of the querent will dominate the reading. Cynics might point out that this insistence is of financial value to people who derive income from reading Tarot cards.

The way to structure a two-person reading depends on the theory. In all cases, the querent asks the question and the reader interprets the fall of the cards. The fall of the cards is determined by shuffling, which may be a joint process, or it may be done entirely by the reader or by the querent.

If the theory of unconscious determination is used, then the reader should shuffle the cards, though the querent may cut them to feel more involved with the process. The reader should watch the cut carefully so the necessary information may be transmitted to the unconscious mind. The reader is skilled in determining the fall of the cards; the querent is not.

If the synchronicity theory is used, then the querent or the reader may shuffle the cards. It makes no difference, since the synchronistic meaning comes through purely random factors.

If the theory of spirits is used, then again the reader should shuffle, since ordinary people do not particularly want to channel spirits to get a Tarot reading. If they wanted to get their hands that wet, they would probably do the divination themselves. Again, having the querent cut the deck is a meaningless symbol of involvement, but the spirits arrange the deck after the querent cuts it.

If the theory of order from chaos is used, it makes no difference who or what shuffles, just as with synchronicity.

Telling the Future

The popular view of Tarot cards is that they "tell the future". That is the meaning of the popular synonym for divination, "fortune-telling". Any sort of question may be asked of

the Tarot cards, which does not exclude telling the future. But that is not the only end to which the cards may be put.

When telling the future, the questions of predestination and psychic powers inevitably arise. If we can accurately read the future, then the future must already exist in some sense, and we must have some way of viewing it.

On the question of predestination, science and philosophy are inconclusive. Modern physics is clear that the world is not deterministic; there are many experiments with physics on a small scale that show nature to be probabilistic. Many things happen on the sub-atomic scale without any real reason, simply because it was more or less likely that they would happen and they wound up happening or not. This would seem to fly in the face of predestination; the future state of the universe depends on truly random and unpredictable events.

But these events may be truly random yet, in a sense, already have happened. Time may be viewed as a fourth dimension like our usual three spatial dimensions. If so, then one may take a static view of the universe's history, in which the whole of time is a static construct when viewed from without, that is, from a five-dimensional perspective. The exact nature of the "arrow of time" has yet to be clearly determined, and it is impossible to say now whether a higher-dimensional traveller would see the past as still with us and the future as already laid out.

The question of psychic powers is even more difficult. No such powers have ever been shown to exist in any replicable experiment; at best, such experiments barely squeak in under the margin of significance, and then only after averaging thousands of trials which are not individually significant.

Yet many people believe in them regardless, and these people erect theories to explain them. One of the more popular theoretical ideas of psychic powers is that the psyche somehow exists in a higher dimension. From a higher-dimensional viewpoint it might be possible to look out over the four-dimensional history of the world and see what is to come.

This is written in 1990 in San Francisco, and it seems rather telling to this writer that of the great events which have taken place recently -- the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the independence of Eastern Europe, the San Francisco earthquake -- none were foretold by psychics. One would think such momentous happenings would fairly blaze forth before a psychic eye, yet they didn't.

It is probably best to use a weaker form of the precognition idea, which does not involve a predestined future or psychic powers. Instead, the unconscious mind is viewed as having the power to perceive more or less where some events are heading, and to present its views on the subject -- which may be right or wrong -- through a Tarot reading. Of course, the conscious mind can also make some predictions based on its knowledge. The idea is that the unconscious mind is attentive to different factors and

will make predictions the conscious mind could not.

Another "weak" form of precognition involves synchronicity. Events and Tarot readings are "riding the same waves", so one can cast light on the other.

Finally, it is best to take all answers about the future with a grain of salt. It is also wise to phrase questions in such a way that they ask for perspectives on what is happening and what has happened, and for guidance, rather than for outright predictions of the future.

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Twilight Crossing

Twilight Crossing is a magical assembly dedicated to assisting its members in the pursuit of their artistic and spiritual satisfaction.

0. Legends

A. Thirty centuries ago, dark crossroads were haunted by Hekate, earth goddess (or demon) of magic and sorcery. Hekate was far older than the "classical" gods of the Greeks. She was one of that band of primeval deities known as Titans who were deposed by the patriarchal conquerors of the Grecian lands. The myths were rewritten to parallel politics: the Titans were cast down from Heaven to the pits of Tartarus by Zeus, the God-King; yet Hekate had always lived there beneath the ground. Alone of the Titans she retained her status in later myth. Of the elder goddesses of the region, she was one of many retained by the invaders, but the only one not reduced to a pretty ankle and a breeder. Every home in Athens was fronted by an altar to Hekate: her worship was strongest in the Greek city-state with the smallest amount of centralized control and with the least power given over to a King.

B. Ghost-herding Hekate, with her hair wound with snakes, dogs howling about her heels, and a guttering torch borne in one hand, represented a vital current of underworld power too strong for the force of arms to suppress. Her old Colchian sorceresses, Medea and Circe, became oddly sympathetic villainesses: their old herbal drugs were fermented to poisons, their sex magics were retold as child murders, their shamanistic animal transmutations were reduced to spells that waylaid careless adventurers; yet as a token of "respect", each became the lover and helpmate of great heroes - Jason over Medea, and Odysseus over Circe. Hekate's great sorceresses were thus degraded more than the goddess herself. In the West's Middle Ages, these legendary sorceresses became the models of those most feared women, the witches, and Hekate was degraded to their unholy Queen. Those dead who were refused the sacraments were buried at crossroads, where once sacrifices to Hekate were held. And all without any change in their basic attributes, representing those qualities sacred to paganism which despots abhor in any hands but their own :- will, beauty, immortality, knowledge, power, mystery, ecstasy, love. In middle Christendom all these became crimes.

C. In middle and modern times, this current of dark power has come to be known as

"Satanic" by analogy to Satan, the chief demon of the monotheistic triad. Like Hekate, Satan represents the underworld, sorcery, and opposition to the ruling gods. Satan's name is the Hebrew word for "enemy" he is identified with the Serpent that brought humanity to ruin, and in legend he was cast down to Hell from Heaven. In the Zoroastrian religion a similar devil was known as Ahriman, a name which also means "enemy". Zoroastrianism, endorsed and enforced by the Persian Kings, saw all existence as a war between Ahura Mazda, the god of light and the Sun, and Ahriman, the dark god of evil and snakes. The ancient Egyptians feared Set, an earlier form of Satan, dweller in the demon-haunted land beneath the earth through which the Sun-King fought his way each night. Set was aided by his serpentine ally, the monstrous Apep, and a host of magical snakes. Set had been one of the greatest and most ancient gods of Egypt, but his people were conquered. For a long while he enjoyed a Hekatean status as the necessary ruler of the darker aspects of life, and he was degraded into more and more a demon as time wore on. By the time of the mythical Exodus, Set was a generic enemy, and glorious tales of battle became tales of victory of the Sun over Set and his minions. Just so the early Hebrew scriptures use "satan" as a generic term for their military enemies in Palestine.

D. A pattern emerges from the "anti-gods" of history. Time and again, serpent deities representing both the underworld and magic have been declared inconvenient and driven from their status by official violence, figured in myth by a Sun-God who is also the King. It is not enough to forget them as most deposed deities are forgotten; they must be demonized.

E. How does this demonization serve the needs of those in power? Authority feeds on enmity. The exercise of power is easiest to justify against an absolutely evil enemy who plainly demands the strictest opposition. Once this license for power against evil is obtained by consent of the people, it is easily applied against the people themselves. Most will never object to the ferreting out of "agents of evil" in their midst, will indeed gleefully support such a campaign of persecution. By supporting the authorities they vicariously exercise the same unfettered power. It is very comforting to be one of the agents of shining good standing firm against unimaginable depravity. But reality is not obliging in providing absolute evils for the use of Kings; all enemies are more understandable and sympathetic when more is known about their motives and history. Imaginary enemies do not evoke this difficulty, and once the belief in imaginary enemies - Satan, the International Communist Conspiracy, whatever - is established, it is easy to represent real people as agents of these ultimate enemies. Hekate would hardly have found a friendly home in Sparta. The common beliefs about Hekate, Ahriman, Marx, and the rest serve a vital political purpose.

F. But why are underworld and sorcerous deities especially demonized? Officialdom is chiefly opposed to the individual will: the power that authority delights in exercising is the power of imposing its will on others. The opposition to this authoritarian will is the individual fount of creativity and unpredictability. In psychology, this fount is called the unconscious mind, the obscure and unseen intelligence which motivates us all to seek our own paths. The unconscious mind, the dark side of the psyche, is the symbolic

meaning of the mythical underworld or "Hell." Tyrants are right to fear this deep well of power and to frighten their subjects away from it. Sorcery is a symbol of independent action, unauthorized and unregulable, obeying only the laws of the dark side and scorning the workings of temporal power. Tyrants who believe in its "magical" power fear it for pragmatic reasons, but these mundane concerns reflect the nature of the sorcerous myth. The individual sorceress could, like Medea, shatter the structures of authority if they became intolerably alienating. Sorcery is the mythological face of art. All good artists are sorcerors; spell-weavers; subversives; Satanists.

G. The veneration of demons is not, as is commonly believed, the "worship of evil", but an escape from the authoritarian mentality of "us vs. them", of allies and enemies, of repressive and arbitrary regulations expressed for power itself rather than for the general interest, of good and evil as absolute forces in the world rather than as subjective judgments applied to human behavior. All these naive or corrupt political influences are banished from the crossroads at twilight by the irresistible, but subtle, influence of Hekate, snake-woman, Medea's muse, friend and mistress of the hounds of Hell; they are cracked and ruined by this sorceress behind and beyond all sorcery.

H. Among the major exponents of this "Satanism" or "Diabolism" have been poets and playwrights, musicians and magicians: such as Rabelais, Blake, Shelley, Baudelaire, Swinburne, Shaw, Crowley, and (most recently) Galas. The assembly known as Twilight Crossing has an interest in continuing and expanding on this tradition, known as the "Satanic school" in the Oxford English Dictionary, without dogmatically adhering to any one creator's conception of it.

I. The symbol of the crossing is significant beyond its Hekatean correspondence (but in ways that reflect on that symbolism). Conventional magical orders, covens, and the like, teach a path, a sequence of initiations or similar steps, more or less fixed in structure and adapted little if at all to the individual. Twilight Crossing is instead a meeting of paths, an intersection of ways: yet a particular meeting point, a crossroad sacred to Hekate, rather than a union of all paths. There may be those people whose roads do not touch this crossroad, but we welcome meetings with them at other intersections; and we remind them (and ourselves) that Hekate may live even where she is not at once apparent.

1. Membership

A. The only requirement for membership in Twilight Crossing is a shared interest in the Hekatean or Satanic current expressed in poetry, theatre, music, magic, and other arts.

B. The Crossing makes no promises of magical powers, exalted spiritual degrees, contact and contract with discorporate beings, nor simple answers to difficult questions. Nor does it forbid its members or assemblies from asserting such powers, degrees, contacts, or answers.

C. Members of Twilight Crossing are free to believe what they will, but they are expected to scrutinize their beliefs to avoid dogmatism and folly.

D. Members of Twilight Crossing are free to behave as they will, but they are expected to monitor their actions to avoid disrespect for their own interests and the interests of others.

E. Twilight Crossing officially supports the rights of all human beings as put forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All forms of discrimination on grounds of race, gender, national origin, social class, sexual preference, religion, creed, and so forth are expressly forbidden at the Crossing. The only exception is that assemblies formed exclusively of members of oppressed groups, such as women or African-Americans, are permitted.

F. The Hekatean symbolism used to define the Crossing must not be taken as a mandate of literal belief in such a being, or in any spiritual being. Nor must the use of the symbolism of sorcery be taken as mandating a belief in the "paranormal" or extraspsychological powers of the black arts. Such matters are left to the individual judgment of members.

G. Rituals of initiation, meditation, invocation, celebration, and so forth are sponsored by assemblies of the Crossing and by the Crossing as a whole for the artistic and spiritual benefit of the members. In all such rituals, the widest possible latitude of beliefs is to be embraced, so that no one should feel excluded because of the integrity of their intellectual conscience. Rituals and other works sponsored by the Crossing as a whole are to avoid all definite statements of belief or disbelief in such matters as the primacy of a certain artistic movement or the reality of spiritual beings and psychic powers. It is accepted that particular assemblies may be composed only of those who share an opinion on certain matters.

2. Hierarchy

A. All hierarchy is suspect. The Satanic school stands firmly against all abuses of power, all attempts to reduce living beings to positions in an organizational chain, all stamping of people with formal estimates of merit, all dehumanization and forced conformity.

B. The Crossing has no doctrines other than those intended to guarantee the freedom of its membership and of all people. To the extent that the Crossing has any fixed rules at all, they are meant only as pragmatic guidelines, and should never be considered to overrule the freedom of thought of any member. Any member or assembly finding itself in conflict with the "rules" of the Crossing should consider carefully before leaving the group, and should instead strive to preserve the meeting of the paths. If the free resolution of this conflict requires a change in the rules of the Crossing, then let the other members and assemblies not balk, but gratefully accept.

C. There are no degrees, grades, or titles at the Crossing proper. All members are considered equal.

D. Should it become necessary to impose some governing council on the Crossing due to the size of its membership, all its offices shall be selected by the full membership, and those who hold such positions shall not be considered superior to other members in any essential way. The full membership shall also have the opportunity to determine the structure of any governing body and to remove unfit members from leadership via the democratic process. All these votes will be decided by simple plurality, but no vote is valid without the votes of more than one-half of all members.

E. The founder and early members of Twilight Crossing enjoy no special status within the group, though they are free to pursue whatever offices are open to other members.

F. Individuals are generally accepted without difficulty. If a member challenges an admission, and another seconds the objections, then a general vote will be taken among the members. The admission is rejected on a two-thirds vote of those participating. (There is no voting quorum.) A member may also be ejected by a vote of two-thirds in similar fashion. Excessive dogmatism or exclusivism, or radical disregard for the rights of others, are the only grounds for refusal or removal of an individual.

F. This foundation document and any other rules may be amended by a vote of three quarters of the membership.

3. Assemblies

A. Twilight Crossing harbors various assemblies, or "special interest groups", dedicated to particular shared interests within the Satanic school. These are chiefly intended to be oriented towards the execution of various artistic projects, but may also form research groups, social groups, informal discussion groups not explicitly devoted to any particular project, and so on.

B. Rules concerning freedom of belief are somewhat relaxed within the assemblies, so that people who share particular opinions may work together on projects dependent on those conditions. For instance, a group dedicated to atheism and to the freeing of members' minds from all belief in literal gods would certainly fall under the aegis of the Satanic school and Twilight Crossing in particular, but would be incapable of meaningfully including members who did believe in literal gods. Similarly, a group especially dedicated to occult spellcasting intended to work effects at a distance could hardly benefit from the presence of skeptics. And likewise for the reverse of these opinions.

C. Assemblies are permitted to draw their doctrinal basis more narrowly than the Crossing as a whole, but they are expected to deal with their differences from other opinions as disagreements among reasonable people, rather than a special handle on the absolute truth which renders them the denizens of Olympus and others the denizens of Hell. Assemblies with apparently contradictory beliefs should appoint liaisons to each other and encourage dialog, but they should not shy away from argument as if intellectual competition were some unthinkable poison or rudeness.

D. These relaxed rules on doctrine should not be taken as a license for dogmatism. Limits on opinion are to be as unrestrictive as possible given the mission of the assembly and the nature of its shared interest. Any limits are to be drawn out explicitly when the assembly is proposed, and cannot be narrowed without recertification by the whole Crossing (as below) and by two-thirds of the entire assembly. Furthermore, an assembly should be so arranged that persons not sharing the assembly's common opinions would not be especially interested in joining its projects.

E. Assemblies are created by assent of the whole membership. A simple plurality of votes, with a voting quorum of fifty per cent, admits an assembly to the Crossing. A vote of two thirds, with the same quorum, dissolves an assembly. Excessive dogmatism or exclusivism, or radical disregard for the rights of others, are the only grounds for refusal or dissolution of an assembly.

4. Initiations

A. In no case is attendance at any initiation ritual mandatory for continued membership in Twilight Crossing as a whole, though it may be required for membership in a particular assembly.

B. No initiation or other ritual sponsored by the Crossing or any assembly is to be taken as conferring any intrinsic spiritual superiority over those who have not taken the degree. Such rituals represent a personal progress along a particular path of artistic or spiritual refinement. Initiations should be structured in an open, not linear, fashion to help assure this, though this is only a recommendation.

C. It is acceptable that one initiation should have some other as a prerequisite so long as there remain multiple threads of initiation - that is, so long as the initiatory paths of different assemblies are open to all.

D. It is acceptable that those undergoing initiation rituals should be sworn to secrecy concerning the contents of those rituals, but only so that the rituals do not lose their efficacy through predictability.

E. Individuals are not to be subjected to unanticipated physical jeopardy, or any deliberate harm of any kind, by any initiation or other ritual at Twilight Crossing.

5. Relations to Other Groups

A. Members are free to sponsor their own rituals, groups, and so forth which involve practices frowned on at the Crossing, and to belong to such groups sponsored by others. Twilight Crossing encourages its members to join any and all religious or artistic groups which seem fit to them while members of the Crossing, as was often the case among the pagan mystery traditions of ancient Rome.

B. Twilight Crossing is especially interested in maintaining good relations with other groups which define themselves as occult, Satanic, or Neo-Pagan in orientation, all of which are words which describe the Crossing as well. However, to the extent that the

practices of these groups conflict with the values of Twilight Crossing, those groups should expect a certain amount of reasonable criticism from its members. This criticism is a vital and important function of the values of the Crossing; it is not intended to damage relations with other groups, but neither should members of the Crossing fail to respect their own interests in free intellectual exercise by artificially restricting the scope of their comments.

C. Despite its orientation towards the Titans and Satan, the Crossing has no fixed teaching relative to Classical Greek mythology nor towards Christianity and the other two major monotheistic religions. A person holding any of these traditions in high regard should not feel constrained by that opinion against membership in Twilight Crossing. Just as it is by no means obvious that a modern Christian must oppose Buddhism simply because it teaches that God is deluded, neither is it clear that a freethinking Christian must oppose the redeemed symbolism of Hekate or Satan merely because their tradition has been one of the demonizers. The way is especially open to contacts with those modern Christian individuals and groups which share the Crossing's distaste for dogma and repression.

D. The Crossing is critical of many temporal authorities. All governments drawn to date are flawed by authoritarianism and narrow-mindedness. Its right to criticize officialdom is guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nonetheless, it is not seeking the violent overthrow of these governments as a matter of policy. Its official position advocates peaceful revolution through education, just as happened in the states of Eastern Europe shortly before the founding of the Crossing. Medea overthrew the rulers of Corinth through her sorcerous knowledge, not by staging a coup. In the Twilight Crossing's symbolism, sorcery means art and knowledge, not the force of arms. Individual members of the Crossing may support one or more revolutionary movements throughout the world, but they do so as individuals and not as members of the Crossing. No project of Twilight Crossing or any of its assemblies seeks the violent overthrow of any government.

E. The Crossing does, however, refuse to recognize laws which stand in contravention to the rights of artistic and religious freedom, and freedom of thought and privacy, such as restrictions against sexual practices between consenting and sexually mature persons and against the voluntary consumption of consciousness-altering drugs. From the prehistoric past through the present, many cultures have incorporated both sex and drugs into religious and artistic practices, and it has credibly been argued by some scholars that all religion derives from them. Religious prostitution and sacramental drugs have been common mysteries of pagan religion from before the start of recorded history, and strong traces of both remain in the myths of monotheism as well. Twilight Crossing firmly insists that all people have the right to engage in sacred practices of these venerable types, and that no government or other agency has the right to interfere in them any more than in any exercise of freedom of religion or freedom of thought. Our patron sorceresses Medea and Circe had mastered every form of magic drug and herb, and of the arts of love; we would be untrue to their legend were we to turn away from their wisdom for mere political convenience.

6. Contact

Twilight Crossing is in the process of formation. Those interested in assisting in its creation or in forming assemblies may call or write the author of this document, Tim Maroney.

[Note: I shut down the project after about a dozen people expressed interest and an electronic mailing list was formed. Please don't write me about starting up Twilight Crossing again!]

http://maroney.org/Essays/Why_Crowley_Doesn%27t_Suck.html

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Why Crowley Doesn't Suck

by Tim Maroney (1997)

I've been reflecting on my contributions to the Thelema list since coming back from vacation, and I noticed that I seem to come down pretty hard on Mr. Crowley. I've said many things like this: He was psychologically naive; his history and politics were uneducated and facile; he failed to make any contribution to philosophy or even to grasp it at a baccalaureate level; it would have been a nightmare if he had achieved secular power; and so on. This may have created a false impression about my feelings towards the man and his work, and I thought I might try to explain.

To understand Aleister Crowley's contributions one needs to create a new category, which I will call "ritual arts." This is a new category only in that it has not been called out as such; people have traditionally viewed ritual (by which I include meditation) as either sacred and beyond mere criteria of artistry, or as socially functional and to be understood as part of a society. I propose that we look at it as an art form related to theater. It is in the area of the stylistic construction of ritual and meditative practices, and as an explicator of these processes of construction and performance, that Crowley comes into his own. In fact, his contributions in this area are unique and deserve to be part of any religious studies program.

Crowley was a poet, perhaps only of the second rank, but a poet by nature nonetheless, and the grace and beauty of the poetic sentiment infuses all his rituals and meditations. While one could find much to criticize in his overall corpus - poems choked with purple like kudzu, two-dimensional fiction, megalomaniacal essays proposing ultimate answers to questions he did not understand - there is none of this in his ritual instructions. Their style is beautifully sparse, like watermarks on rice paper, with just a gentle touch of purple and a hint of that which cannot quite be put into words. All the flaccid prose of the Golden Dawn, with its pompous Masonic declamation, has been put aside for its few true approaches to the spirit. The result is a genuineness and sincerity of aspiration and experience which is not only beautiful to read but compelling to perform.

In poetry derived from ritual and meditative experience, particularly the sublime Book of Lies and the "Hymn to Pan", Crowley sometimes enters the first rank of metaphysical

poets. When he is working from the soul, rather than indulging in the superficial play-acting so characteristic of occultists, he has no need to tart up his work. When he lapses into posing the result is awful - the impenetrable Aha! comes to mind - but our need to exercise selectivity with respect to Crowley's voluminous output in no way vitiates the quality of his best work.

Though his solitary rituals are perfect gems, the same cannot be said of his group rituals. The O.T.O. initiations are lifeless and dull, though occasionally clever, and the less said about his "Rites of Eleusis" the better. The one really successful group ritual he created was the "Gnostic Mass," and even that still creates for many observers the false impression that it is a mere mockery of the Catholic Mass. Despite its strengths, the Gnostic Mass institutionalized Crowley's misogynist ideas about the sexual magic that was central to his system. His belief that "man is the guardian of the Life of God; woman but a temporary expedient; a shrine indeed for the God, but not the God" reduces the priestess, despite a promising introduction, to a mere functionary for the priest, waiting passively as he does all the work in which the real sacredness resides. This point is not lost on most observers and serves to discourage many women from pursuing Crowley studies.

Crowley's longer writings about ritual and meditation practice, of which the best examples are *Magick in Theory and Practice* (MTP) and *Eight Lectures on Yoga*, exist in a gray area. The grayness results from Crowley's unfortunate attempts to delve into philosophy and his self-aggrandizing accounts of his own spiritual authority. To consider only MTP, it leads off with a ridiculous philosophical claim to have reconciled nihilism, monism and dualism by simply attributing each to one to the Thelemic trinity of gods. MTP is riddled with megalomaniacal passages and specious philosophical observations. Yet when Crowley simply explains how he thinks rituals work, what feelings he associates with particular points of ritual, styles appropriate to particular points, and how the parts integrate into the whole, he presents a comfort with and knowledge of Western occult modes that would be difficult to find anywhere else.

I have in the past faulted MTP for parochialism, in that Crowley seems to take a particular ritual formula as paramount when in fact there are many other forms of magical ritual, and for exegesis instead of analysis, since he generally fails to jump to a meta-level of analysis to engage basic questions, such as why we would want to do ritual in the first place or why rituals should involve mythic figures such as gods. For these issues one will have to go to ritual studies and anthropology. Still, the fact that he fails to contribute here does not mean that he makes no contribution at all. His account of his own practice and of his thinking about it is unusually detailed and beautifully rendered, and deserves general study as a unique window into practice.

One more of Crowley's strong points deserves mention, again related to his writing. The *Equinox* is half mystical encyclopedia and half literary journal. While its literary contributions are not stellar, they are good, and the playful, knowing feel of the whole is as pleasant now as it was almost a century ago. Mystics and magicians today are often faced with a great cultural divide from their spiritual ancestors, and simply to see a

magician being very much a man of the twentieth century is a useful lesson.

Of course, none of this excuses Crowley's more egregious personality failings or his dilettante excursions into areas he was unable to understand, which I will continue to underline as the opportunity presents itself. In the future, though, I will try to give equal time to the good and the bad, rather than allowing myself to be drawn into the reactive mode of constantly correcting his followers when they demand that Crowley be showered with unearned rewards.

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Why I Study Magic

by Tim Maroney (1998)

This essay is an exercise in introspection. A friend recently asked me, "Why are you into magic?" There is no single answer. I will try to explore various motivations, both my own and what I imagine others' to be.

Intellectual Exploration

I am motivated by a quest for knowledge, that is, by curiosity. I'm an intellectual type and I like to be able to formulate clear ideas about things. My spiritual experiences are very hard for me to understand. I don't even have a good concept of the scope of the subject. What is the spiritual? Is it a group of psychological faculties? Or an arbitrary semantic convention that conflates dissimilar phenomena? Is it a value judgment masquerading as an observational category? Or does it indicate some underlying psychological or metaphysical reality around which we revolve, whether we know it or not?

I can't answer these questions. They may not ultimately be answerable, because spirituality seems to take us outside the realm of reason. However, by doing ritual and meditation by myself and with others, and observing in a phenomenological mode - that is, accepting mental phenomena as real without regard to their accuracy or defensibility - I feel that I am getting closer to understanding parts of the continuum of spirituality. At least I am asking better questions than I used to. My curiosity about the spiritual has become a goal in its own right, whether or not this curiosity furthers my own spiritual development; the spirit has become a subject for psychology.

Largely as a result of my interest in spiritual experience, I have become interested in related subjects, such as the history of occultism and the social dynamics of spiritual groups. I find that spiritual practice and group membership provide useful resources and observational opportunities to further these studies.

This is all very interesting, at least to me, but by itself it is only "the dogs of reason." There is more.

Spiritual Practice

My interest in magic is not from the armchair, at least not exclusively. I meditate, I do yoga, I attend and perform various rituals by myself and in groups, as well as reading voraciously in occult, pagan, and philosophical subjects and in general religious studies. Why would anyone spend time on such apparently futile activities? From the outside it's all a lot of mumbo-jumbo.

One of the popular answers among ceremonial magicians these days holds that "I'm a trance junkie," or "I'm a ritual junkie," or words to that effect. The meaning is "I derive pleasure from the effects that ritual practices have on me and so I seek them out." This formula would be part of my answer, but I wouldn't characterize myself as a "junkie": I like to modify my consciousness but it's not the central axis of my life and I don't depend on it (at least, I don't think I do).

Many traditional mystics would be appalled at the "ritual junkie" idea. It contrasts with traditional ideals of redemption through spiritual practice and says simply, "it feels good, so I do it." However, many traditionalists also hold out ideals of redemption that fall onto the reward-punishment spectrum, such as eternal bliss or perfect happiness. The simple rewarding nature of spiritual practice, the fact that it induces pleasurable mental states, is the Great Unspoken (or Nietzschean pudenda) of mystical theory. It's a motivation that mystics have always had but wouldn't admit to, or that they held at arms' length by issuing stern warnings against it. If the pleasure principle turns spiritual practice into a kind of masturbation, I would answer that we're no longer so opposed to the art of self-pleasure.

Still I think there is more to spiritual practice than pleasurable diddling. When I first got involved with magic in my mid-teens it had a lot to do with psychedelic drugs. My goal in magic and meditation was to trip without chemicals, and I still enjoy that when it happens (say, from a good hatha yoga session), but I've also come to share the concern that this can be a kind of "spiritual materialism," to use Chogyam Trungpa's term. Getting off is good but it's distinct from and may sometimes even be in opposition to spiritual progress. Even with drugs there's more going on than direct reward through bliss. Basic assumptions about the world and the self are thrown into a different light from which they may be re-examined, where before they were not even recognized as assumptions, but thought to be facts. The process by which we create our personal image of the world is illuminated and the limits of our consciousness are shown to be self-imposed; we are exposed to "other forms of consciousness completely different," as William James wrote of his nitrous oxide experiences. This has the potential to broaden our mental scope, just as travel broadens our social ideas.

Another Great Unspoken about spiritual practice is ego. Just as it's pleasant to one's self-image to be distinctly strong of body, so it is to be strong of mind. The self-esteem benefits of exercise are desirable but they often go too far. I've grown tired of "magic jocks" who measure their self-worth by the intensity of their ritual power. The size of one's muscles is no measure of physical health, and "roaring like a blast furnace" in ritual is no indication of mental health. In fact people can seriously hurt themselves by going ruthlessly for maximum strength. Some strength is good; for some people a lot of

strength is good; but health is more a matter of overall balance, flexibility and tone than of ultimate capacity in one area. When someone is devoted heart and soul to a particular system of spiritual symbols there may be a tremendous ritual power in that, but perhaps the system itself becomes one of those unexaminable assumptions, Blake's "mind-forg'd manacles we bear," that spiritual practice ought to be helping us deconstruct. Quietism is a bit namby-pamby but to be a mighty dragon ever thundering also has its problems.

Personal Development

"Spiritual progress" is an important concept to me but I find its meaning elusive.

I am not drawn to traditional ideas of initiation. In systematized magic or mysticism spiritual progress is divided into initiatic levels, or numbered stages of progress. I can't accept these scales of development, including the binary scale of enlightenment or non-enlightenment. People are not numbers and if you tell me "so-and-so is a third degree" you have told me exactly nothing about them. These systems and distinctions are too impersonal, and too many people seem to be hurt by them rather than helped. No one is more unenlightened than those who are convinced of their enlightenment.

A similar scale is that of salvation, where a person is saved (1) or unsaved (0). To me there is entirely too much emphasis on redemption in traditional scales of progress whether they use the words "redemption" and "salvation" or not. The "first matter" or non-initiate in traditional magic is held to be utterly worthless: blind, fettered, desperately in need of the system to show him or her the light. Obviously this is insulting and serves the purpose of maintaining hierarchical social structures. Just as obviously, though, there is some metaphorical truth to it. Relative to the later and developed state, the earlier and undeveloped person is burdened by blinders that look like glasses, and hobbled by chains that feel like shoes. More than how we look at others, this is how we look back at ourselves.

The problems for me in the black-and-white version of the metaphor are that this conflates different people's relative states, and requires self-loathing on the part of the initiatory candidate. If we had a way to measure someone's illumination - which we don't - I think we would find that many perfectly ordinary uninitiated people are less deluded than many seekers who have been strenuously applying themselves to the mystical path for years. A confident and healthy person would find little appeal in being superior to everyone else because of initiatory ceremonies, but among "initiates" one constantly encounters just this demeaning attitude. Similarly, a healthy person who found that a system demanded abject self-abasement to questionable "superiors" would probably select themselves out in short order. These hierarchical formulae appeal most strongly to people who - to be blunt - already hate themselves, find their negative self-image confirmed by being treated as the worthless "first matter" of the art, and achieve comfort in having the onus of their low self-esteem displaced onto "uninitiates."

I find better company in people who are not plagued with unreasonable self-doubt and who recognize and work with their strengths. I wish our spiritual systems selected for

them instead of weeding them out. American hatha yoga instruction has gone in this direction, though once one moves on to more spiritual limbs of yoga the old demeaning hierarchies tend to reassert themselves. More needs to be done in reforming the teaching of meditative practices.

I am only describing a general trend and not tarring all initiates with this brush. I am an initiate myself, though once again it is not the axis of my life. I simply want to express that I would be more comfortable with spiritual systems that start with the basic strength and insight the person already has and develop that, rather than starting with the need for redemption. A better metaphor than removing a blindfold would be teaching the initiate how to make binoculars. I think groups starting without the "original sin" of the "first matter" would be less likely to attract neurotics and exaggerate their neuroses, and so less prone to the infighting that wracks magical groups.

So I will move on to my personal idea of my progress. Although it is tangible to me, I have a hard time saying exactly what it is. I know it has resulted from psychotherapy, from yoga, and from re-examining and redefining my assumptions, especially assumptions about relationships with others and with the external world in general. There is an aspect of self-knowledge and self-acceptance, a willingness to express myself spontaneously and embrace my feelings rather than trying to manipulate myself, an emergence of a mental quiet space, a recognition of personal patterns which previously were unconscious or denied, and a number of specific personal advances that result from being freed from unexamined patterns and from a distaste for myself. There's a long way to go and there may not be any end to the path, or it may be that the path is longer than I could walk in this one lifetime (so far as I know, the only one I have), but I know I am on this path and have come a certain way so far.

Magic in the sense of ritual has not been all that useful to me in this kind of progress and I have come to distrust it as affording a scope for acting out and for compensatory ego-inflation. That is, the intentional nature of ritual may unconsciously enact a neurotic pattern while rewarding limiting patterns I would do better to transcend. When I do ritual now, on the other hand, erosion of my mental blocks and acceptance of my aspirations have made ritual more effective in transforming my consciousness than it used to be. So ritual magic is related in some way to spiritual progress and may at some future time become more of a vehicle of my development than it is for me now.

I am attracted to an exercise model of development, in contrast with grandiose conceptions of redemption and ascension through spiritual degrees. Concentration, imagination, steadiness, even power are useful things to have. My analogy to physical exercise is deliberate: there is value to "spiritual bodybuilding" so long as it doesn't degenerate into vain self-admiration. Where a traditional conception would hold, for instance, that "by ascending the Ladder of Lights the devout seeker may be admitted into the innermost Mystery that maketh man God," under the exercise model one would say "by practicing mental disciplines one strengthens, balances and cleanses mental faculties." Yoga obviously fits this model, even in its highest limbs; classical yoga scripture depicts the ultimate goal pragmatically as the stilling of thought-waves.

Psychotherapy is also a fairly good match, where the faculty exercised is spontaneous introspection. Ritual magic exercises the abilities of concentration and visualization, as well as the ability to transform perceptions of space, and a host of others. This too is a kind of progress.

Mystery

I don't mean to sell short transcendental models of progress. I'm uncomfortable trying to reduce, for instance, my devotions to Hecate or Pan to mere exercises meant to strengthen whatever parts of the nervous system are involved in bhakti. There is something missing from the exercise model but the usual metaphysical models are vapid and do nothing to satisfy my intellectual desire for understanding. Still I must attend to the fact that "reason is a lie; for there is a factor infinite & unknown; & all their words are skew-wise" (to quote Crowley's "devil or angel" Aiwaz.)

Mystical experience deconstructs ordinary modes of thought and makes us aware of the fragility of intellectual concepts. The best scientific models appear as frail girders strung out thinly through an immeasurable abyss. Existence is biological, not intellectual - even inanimate matter or empty space is more richly layered and subject to more powers and forces than we could ever hope to enumerate. No idea ever truly captures any phenomenon.

It is a mystery why intellect works at all, or what it means to say that it works. No one knows what "natural laws" are and scientists have mostly given up on the question. It's possible to create mathematical theories that mechanically generate predictions that turn out to be more or less accurate within their very limited domains. We don't know what the accuracy of a prediction means or what it means to measure the results of an experiment or why equations should make accurate predictions. These questions continue to baffle philosophers, who have turned to petty squabbling over inconsequential ramifications of their pet notions. Two millenia have passed and no one knows how to answer Pilate's question. What is truth? We just make theories, measure their results, and stick with the ones that make predictions we find useful or interesting. We imagine we are being "rational" when we are following instincts that we may never understand.

In me these intellectual instincts are relatively strong and so I seek a psychology of the spiritual, but I know it will always fall short of the living whole that is spirituality in the real world. So I am not obsessed with turning every experience rational. Paradoxically, too much focus on the rational would undercut the rational approach to psychology that is called phenomenology, which accepts mental phenomena in themselves without judging them by a standard of intellectual accuracy. To seek a spiritual experience is to seek a full experience, not an equation. The experience is "organic" in that it is deeply layered, ever-changing as a fundamental characteristic of its existence, subject to a non-enumerable set of subtle interconnections and dynamics, and rich with odd resonances and self-similarities that suggest meaning without explaining it. By contrast an intellectual theory is cold, static, simple, declarative, and dry.

The heights of philosophy are less intellectual than spiritual. They convey in prose poetry an opening to the organic experience, a transcendence of the plodding and ordinary, a new world of cognition with unfathomable breadths and depths. That they do this while appearing rational is another mystery. Here is where philosophy becomes a true quest for wisdom and escapes the trivialities of the academy, and gives me a reason to study it.

Of course every experience is organic, a deeply complex play of patterns in the nervous system. What distinguishes everyday experience from spiritual experience? One model, expressed most clearly by Naranjo and Ornstein but derived from Eastern philosophy, and easily discernible in Blake, is that we are prone to filter experience down to its dregs, leaving only a pale shadow of the original. That is, our everyday experience is deliberately de-organified, with "nonessential" details removed so that we can concentrate on "relevant" information. Spiritual experience results from lowering these filters, which requires control of the faculty of attention, which requires exercise.

There are other means. Psychedelic drugs can be used to disable filters, but this is not a method I use much these days. I've learned to compensate for them now and they don't scramble the filters the way they used to. (I can't use nitrous oxide as an anesthetic either - I'm a savvy enough tripper to recognize pain, thank you very much.) Ritual uses symbolism to gain control of the faculty of attention and ceremonial magic uses visualization to develop this control, and so ritual magic can be used to break through to the symphonic or organic experience. Nature in all its fractal depth is also evocative of organic experience, and while I do not currently practice Thoreau's walking method of transcendental meditation I hope to start.

It would be sad to find that spirituality is just activation of the neurological "spirituality circuit" and I don't think that's likely to happen. There are no final answers to questions this complex. But it's likely that there are neurological correlates to spiritual experience, and finding them may create a bizarre (perhaps Gigeresque) fusion of technology and spirituality. At the worst, we'll be able to cook up better drugs; at the best, we'll provide people with willed technologies for spiritual activation, perhaps through bioengineered glial cells or such.

Magic Per Se

Many ritualists and mystics would postulate another mystery, that the inner experience controls the outer under certain circumstances. This would explain psychic powers and spell casting. I don't believe in these things, though my opinion isn't set in stone. I've seen many remarkable coincidences but I believe that is what they are, although often they are so striking I think there must be some mysterious connecting factor. I sometimes do rituals for particular purposes but I don't expect the result to happen "supernaturally"; it's more like voluntary self-programming, or even just an acting out of commitment. I do these purposeful rituals rarely as I generally feel I have my life reasonably well under control and I don't need to rely on magic. For instance, on those rare occasions I can't make a choice rationally, I may do a divination using the Yi Jing. My ordinary purpose in ritual and meditation falls under the exercise model. The organic

experience sometimes comes spontaneously in the course of exercise and I rarely try directly to induce it - though if it comes I'm likely to repeat the exercise!

Groups

Finally the subject turns to spiritual groups. Like many of my friends, I have concerns about the intellectual stagnation of the members of these groups, particularly in the occult and pagan communities with which I have the most acquaintance. They claim not to be dogmatic but their members share many unexamined assumptions which they defend with intense hostility when they are called into question, however politely or reasonably. Systems of belief are seductive. I am frightened they will seduce me and repelled when I see others who have been seduced. Looking back on my personal history I can remember times that I fell into rigid systematization and I am ashamed. It's very satisfying to have all the answers but it chokes off the potential for independent thought. Now I am determined to embrace my own ignorance and the intrinsic ambiguity of the world, without abandoning my quest for knowledge.

Groups are hard for me because of my idiosyncracies. People become hostile because of my heretical positions on issues that are close to their hearts. In addition, I find much of the ritual work in these groups is so poorly done that it enters the realm of the patently offensive, like superhero comics or situation comedies. Finally I have personal mental blocks about group membership that derive from my intellectual distance from other children in school and the utter divergence of my interests - mostly scientific at the time - from theirs. I do not expect to fit in and in some ways group integration is a very threatening unknown. I admit that I have been known to act out when I seem to be starting to integrate, which does not always make me the most pleasant company. It takes a lot for me to admit that I like to have a group of friends. Given all this, one would think that I would avoid groups altogether, and for years of my life I have. During the current decade (the 1990's) I have been closer, though. There have even been a few months of heavy involvement here and there. Why?

In brief I know of three reasons. One is educational. I learn about spirituality through contact with others. Topics of study include ritual practice, social dynamics and the role of belief. I learn about methods I would otherwise never encounter, or only read about. I am an O.T.O. member at the moment because it gives me an opportunity to observe and take part in rituals due to its relatively liberal admission policies; if not for that I might never have a chance to study initiation, which is so important to many people.

The second is social. While I might at times deny it, there is something compelling about fraternal dynamics, something more than hanging out with one's friends, even though it is also that. I do not understand this very well yet but I only have the opportunity to study it by belonging to a group. In addition, there is a great range of variation, and I sometimes meet wonderful people who share my unusual interests. I don't know where else I would meet such people.

I suppose I would lump the sexual in with the social. Almost all my girlfriends have had some occult or pagan involvement. Given my own degree of personal involvement and

the general social prejudice against occultism there might be problems otherwise. I don't know where else I would meet suitable partners. But perhaps this assumption reflects some insecurity in myself. I'm a pretty reasonable and accomodating person and could probably come to terms with any spiritual person, occult or otherwise.

Third and last there is the experiential aspect of spirituality in groups. This differs from solitary practice in many ways. In the past I hoped for some balance to my natural reclusiveness by matching solitary practice with group practice, but I have found over time this is based on something of a false distinction, and I no longer feel motivated by the idea of equilibration. This is only a quest for external redemption. So what is different and worthwhile about ritual in groups?

A good group ritual can transform the space more powerfully than most solitary rituals. Something about the group affirmation of the change of space brings in a whole new dimension that is only rarely attained in my private rituals. The energy is thick, hanging almost palpably in the air. This is a remarkable experience and often a very rewarding one. (I feel embarassed by admitting this, as if I should defend my solitary practice, which does transform space. Perhaps I err in saying that group ritual transforms space more, rather than differently.) A bad group ritual, though, can evoke revulsion and offense, whereas a bad solitary ritual is usually only disappointing. I don't have bad trips in solitary ritual or meditation, but I can leave a poorly-done group ritual absolutely furious. In any case, the range of ritual experiences is expanded in groups and so is my understanding as a participant-observer.

Conclusion

There are no doubt a dozen reasons I am leaving out or would not admit to myself. I find that after almost five years of psychotherapy I still can find it hard to discuss my feelings simply and straightforwardly, especially about matters I have such strong feelings about. I hope some of this makes sense and perhaps, my patient reader, even helps you understand some of your own reasons by contrast or comparison with mine. See you in circle!

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Welcome to My Little Piece of Whatever

It's good to have you here at the Villa of the Mysteries at maroney.org. Please use the links column at the edge of each page to navigate.

This site is a resource for students and practitioners of esoteric spirituality, whether they share my beliefs or not. I am a pluralist and my best friends have often been those with whom I most disagree.

Although I am a skeptic, and I do not believe in such things as astrology, reincarnation, God, the spirit world, psychic powers, magic spells, archetypes, and the afterlife, I have long cultivated an interest in alternative religion and other imaginative traditions. My interest is both speculative and operative. As well as reading, thinking and writing about these subjects from a scholarly perspective, I also practice yoga and meditative rituals intended to strengthen and balance my mind and spirit.

My approach to mystical experience is based on phenomenology, a psychological paradigm that treats mental phenomena as real on their own plane without concern for their external truth or falsehood. While I do not think that anything in the objective world is sacred in itself, I recognize and honor the mental process that attaches the human category of sacredness to phenomena. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder but it is there.

What's New

Essays by Tim Maroney - Two new essays: Parts 3 and 4 of "The Included Middle", posted here July 28, 2001.

A Letter to Close - A skeptical analysis of Crowley's "An Open Letter to Those Who Would Join the Order".

The Freedom of Doubt - An essay on the classical skepticism of Sextus Empiricus and how it relates to various forms of skepticism in religious and mystical traditions, including a critical look at Crowley's claims of skepticism.

The Book of Dzian. - (March 7, 2000) My new book has arrived!

Essays by Tim Maroney - Now with two new essays! (Parts 1 and 2 of "The Included Middle", posted here January 2000.) See the broad and confusing scope of my thought about religious and occult matters from my early twenties through my current state of decrepitude! Wonder why people got so damned upset about such dry, academic nonsense! Marvel at the sheer arrogance and excellence of my answers to unanswerable questions!

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The Book of Dzyan
edited by Tim Maroney

"The most insightful and balanced discussion of Blavatsky's writings to date" - K. Paul Johnson, author of *The Masters Revealed*

The Book of Dzyan is the debut volume in a new series of books from Chaosium exploring the connections between occultism and horror fiction, especially the fiction of H. P. Lovecraft. The series is edited by occult scholar Tim Maroney and the debut volume was published on Mardi Gras, 2000. Reviewer, dealer and distributor inquiries are welcome at tim@maroney.org.

Preface to The Book of Dzyan

Although many prominent occultists have practiced the fictional form known as the "weird tale," or more recently simply as "horror," and many horror writers have drawn from the traditions of occultism, it has rarely been understood how much common ground exists between the twin fields of horror fiction and occultism. Partisans for one side or the other have represented the fiction as mere entertainment or the occultism as mere charlatanry, but in fact, the similarity of themes and styles between the fields is anything but coincidental. Nowhere is this clearer than in the works of the grand master of the weird tale, H. P. Lovecraft, whose unique and evocative fusion of occult tradition and the existential horror of the scientific world has kept his work in the public eye all over the world in the half century since his death.

In this series of books, Chaosium will be exploring in depth the occult sources drawn on by Lovecraft in his disquieting tales of ravaging madness, spiritual insight, and the utterly alien. We are pleased to open the series with *The Book of Dzyan* revealed a century ago to Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, herself a writer of weird tales, but best known as the founder of the Theosophical Society, a tremendously influential occult organization that has left its mark not only on all later Western occultists - including Dion Fortune, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, Aleister Crowley, Gerald Gardner, and the founders of the ill-starred Heaven's Gate sect, as well as other UFO devotees, channelers, and the whole New Age movement - but also on Indian history, where it played a major role in reestablishing native pride in the Hindu religion and creating the political party of Mahatma Gandhi.

Of all the many occult traditions he studied, Lovecraft made the greatest use of Theosophy in his fiction and letters. While he was convinced, like most Western

intellectuals, that the late Blavatsky had been proven to be a fraud and had tried to pass off sleights of hand as miracles, nonetheless he found her mythology of her Book of Dzyan fascinating and understood that his own fiction filled a similar mythological niche. Philosophically they could not have been more opposed but on the plane of images and symbols they came together in a creative conflict that would prove vital to Lovecraft's unique development.

This volume presents both original source materials to shed light on the much misunderstood Blavatsky, and an extensive critical introduction that explores her life and her writings as well as the neglected question of her influence on Lovecraft and others. Recent advances in occult scholarship have allowed the editor to paint a much more complete and detailed picture of Blavatsky than has previously appeared in any one place. Partisan biographies that revere her as a visionary saint or damn her as a con artist are both shown to be oversimplifications of her complex and contradictory character. Especially of interest to the student of the weird tale is the first straightforward explanatory commentary on the manuscript she claimed to have learned of in the hidden lamaseries of Tibet, The Book of Dzyan, millions of years older than humanity and the key to all the mysteries of the universe.

In future volumes we will explore other occultists who were used by Lovecraft in his fiction or discussed in his letters and critical writings. We trust that these glimpses beyond the veil of reality will both entertain and inform fans of horror fiction and students of the occult. Perhaps in time both groups will come to understand that, at least in spirit, they are not so far apart.

About the Editor

Tim Maroney has studied various branches of occultism since his childhood, and he has practiced ritual and meditation for more than twenty years. His varied professional writing credits include articles in Gnosis magazine on spiritual aspects of science fiction and computer networking. In recent years he has emerged as a leading occult scholar on computer networks, often seen on the ARCANA occult scholarship list as well as the Thelema list as an expert in Crowley studies. The present volume is his first book. He has been initiated into Western occult fraternities and is not an uncommon guest at rituals in Wiccan and Gnostic traditions. By day he leads software and user experience projects. He lives in Berkeley, California in the USA.

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Facts and Phallacies

by Tim Maroney (1998)

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It is generally agreed that Aleister Crowley's approach to sex magick, and in fact to his religious tradition as a whole, was "phallic." He described it in this way repeatedly and

enthusiastically. This might lead us to wonder whether Crowley was sexist, and whether he considered the male sex organs superior to the female, and by extension, the male superior to the female in general.

There has been surprisingly little discussion of this important issue in O.T.O. publications. Recently the Outer Head of the Order, Hymenæus Beta, printed his Address to the Women's Conference¹ in the international newsletter. This Address touched on a broad range of issues related to Crowley's gender attitudes, but it raised more questions than it settled.

The Gender-Neutral Phallus

According to the Address, Crowley's phallicism does not exclude women, because "phallus" is a gender-neutral term. We are told that Crowley was using a woman-inclusive meaning of "phallus" derived from psychology. "Crowley read his Freud and Jung very thoroughly. He didn't use capital P Phallus without assuming that his readers knew what was meant. Unfortunately few today do. He was referring to the psychoanalytic stage of full genital organization, which is the third of a series. The first state is infantile, undifferentiated, and of course generally chaste. The second stage is narcissistic, usually corresponding to adolescence, and masturbatory. In the third, the phallic as they chose to call it, the individual psychology is so organized as to integrate the psyche with the genital consciousness and its associated instincts, and is then prepared to enter the world, to have intercourse."

Freud's psychosexual theory of development differs. The phallic stage in the Freudian model actually is one of the infantile stages, occurs before the age of five (rather than after adolescence), is specifically "phallic" in the sense of the male generative organ (rather than gender-neutral), and occurs years before the final stage of development, which is called "genital" (a gender-neutral term). In Freud's model, first comes the oral stage, characterized by sucking, biting and swallowing. Second is the anal stage, characterized by toilet training. Third is the phallic stage, about the end of the third or fourth year, characterized by playful self-stimulation, and the formation of the Oedipal complex. During the phallic stage of development comes "penis envy." In this infamous theory, Freud claimed that the natural course of development is stymied during the phallic stage in girls, and that they blame their mothers for their lack of a phallus. Then the fourth stage, from about five until adolescence, is called the latency period, and finally during adolescence the fifth, "genital" stage sets in, characterized by preparation for marriage.²

It is questionable that Crowley read Freud in depth. His scattered references to Freud touch repeatedly on a few broad themes in no great detail. Crowley refers to the primacy of the sex instinct, to the Oedipus complex, and to the unconscious as a source of dreams and phantasms, and little else.

As for Jung, most of his work was unavailable in English until late in Crowley's life or after his death. Crowley did read the first English translation of *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*³. This book deals extensively with phallic symbolism and the libido,

and Crowley refers to it in his commentaries to *The Book of the Law*⁴. Judging by its solar-phallic content, this book may have been a significant influence on Crowley's thought and his reformation of the O.T.O. However, the book condemns Freud's theory, and refers to the "phallus" in its traditional male sense. Jung uses the gender-neutral term "libido" to indicate psychic energy⁵ in both men and women, but "phallus" to refer to the male organ and its symbols. A number of symbols of female genitalia are discussed, but none are called "phallic."

If Crowley had a gender-neutral interpretation of "phallus," he did not get it from Freud, whose use of the word was gender-specific. Nor could this usage derive from Jung, who was no adherent of Freud's psychosexual theory, and who also used "phallus" in a gender-specific sense. Scholarly English⁶ and Greek⁷ dictionaries contain no gender-neutral usage of "phallus" from ancient times to the present. It would be anomalous to ascribe this unique usage to Crowley, who from all indications used the word in its traditional sense. If there is any evidence to establish this peculiar reading, it was not presented in the Address.

An interesting view appears in a book found in the curriculum of Crowley's occult order A.∴A.∴8, Richard Payne Knight's *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* 9. Knight applies the now obsolete method of syncretistic comparativism to a variety of phallic and vulvar deities in an attempt to demonstrate that they all express the Neo-Platonic legend of an original hermaphroditic creator God who split into two halves, one male and one female. He alternates in apparent confusion between asserting that the genders of deities are interchangeable since they all symbolize the original creator, and that male deities represent the "active generative power of God" while female deities represent the "passive generative power of earth." He is more consistent in holding that the differentiated "organs of generation" represent the gender-specific powers. Since he does not use the word "phallus," Knight could not have been the source of the purported usage in Crowley.

There are, however, elements of Knight's original hermaphroditism in Crowley, as in Chapter 35 of *The Book of Lies*, "Venus of Milo," which after condemning the female body as "ugly" states, "the Lingam and the Yoni are but diverse developments of One Organ". In the comment to the chapter, though, Crowley is careful to refute any appearance of egalitarianism. Placing the female in a distinctly inferior position, he writes, "the female body becomes beautiful in so far as it approximates to the male. The female is to be regarded as having been separated from the male, in order to reproduce the male in a superior form". His lukewarm, androcentric redaction of Knight's original hermaphroditism does not suggest that the word "phallus" had a gender-neutral meaning to Crowley, or that either Crowley or Knight regarded the two sets of genitals as interchangeable or equivalent.

A gender-neutral phallicism is hard to see in Crowley's work. There is no reference to any woman as in natural possession of a phallus, and he did not believe that women were equal partners with men in sex. In outer writings his explanation of sex magick revolves around the relationship between father and son, and in the human

quintessence within the semen.¹⁰ Sometimes a mother and daughter are paired with the father and son; often the father and son stand alone; never are the mother and daughter discussed independently. In The Star Sapphire sex magick ritual¹¹, the woman appears only in a bracketed note, and is treated as a tool of the magician, not his partner. The same formula is discernible in the Gnostic Mass, on which more below. In Liber Aleph Crowley writes that pre-eminent in all sex magick “is the Formula of the Serpent with the Head of the Lion,” the semen, “and all this Magick is wrought by the Radiance and Creative Force thereof.”¹² To Crowley the magick is in the man. The woman is a necessary, respected and even consecrated tool of this formula but she is not the source of magick. She is only a magick mirror for the manifestation of the God.

The Matriarchal Æon of Gimbutas

The Address tells us that a matriarchal theory of history expressed by Marija Gimbutas has caught on in academic circles. In fact, though, the consensus view of Gimbutas in her academic field, archæology, rejects her conclusions about a peaceful prepatriarchal society in prehistory. Where the theory has caught on is in the popular mind, because of her popular books on the subject (and those of Riane Eisler¹³), but not in archæology, where it is controversial at best, and more often simply ignored. The model boasts a few scattered advocates in disciplines such as classics and gender studies, but it enjoys only tepid support in any academic field.

Gimbutas does not describe her theory as “matriarchal.” On the contrary, she posits an egalitarian matrilineal society, not a matriarchy. “The world of myth was not polarized into male and female... Both principles were manifest side by side. The male divinity in the shape of a young man or male animal appears to affirm and strengthen the forces of the creative and active female. Neither is subordinate to the other; by complementing one another, their power is doubled.”¹⁴ She refers to the culture of the period as “a balanced, nonpatriarchal and nonmatriarchal social system.”¹⁵ Matriarchy is a feature of Crowley’s Æon of Isis¹⁶ but not of Gimbutas’ “gylanic” prehistory.

The Address’s account of Gimbutas says that about 1000 to 500 BCE, “2,500 to 3,000 years ago — different from Crowley’s 2,000 to 2,500 years [i.e., 500 to 1 BCE], but close enough — she found that an influx of warlike and nomadic Indoeuropean tribes who characteristically worshipped a sky-god moved in and took over.” Actually, though, Gimbutas’s theory of Kurganization concerns events of 5,500 to 6,000 years ago, in the vicinity of 4000 to 3500 BCE, a difference of three millennia from Crowley’s dates.

Dates

Dating discrepancies between Marija Gimbutas, Aleister Crowley and the Women's Conference Address

Crowley’s idea of the Æon of Isis was untenable even in the light of the ancient history available in his time. An Æon is supposed to last around two millennia, with flexibility in the start date of roughly 500 years. This puts Crowley’s Æon of Isis around 3000 to 2000 BCE for its start, and around 500 to 1 BCE for its end. In “Across the Gulf”¹⁷ he placed its end during the life of his previous prophetic incarnation, Ankh-f-n-Khonsu, in

the 26th dynasty of Egypt. This period extends well into written history, and the records and remains of Middle Eastern and European cultures at the time indicate patriarchal political systems. It is hard to see how anyone could think the first 25 Egyptian dynasties were “matriarchal.” The latest possible date for the end of the hypothetical prepatriarchal period is around 3000 BCE, an Æon before Crowley’s date for the end of the Æon of Isis. In proposing that this period was a matriarchal age, Crowley demonstrated that, as he admitted elsewhere, history was never his subject: “he showed intense repugnance to history.”¹⁸ He knew the classical authors and myths, but not the history of the ancient world.

The Address is an example of normal occult history, true to the tradition of Levi, Blavatsky, Crowley, and generations of “Templar” Freemasons. Rather than examining speculative models of history skeptically, it uses mistaken accounts of mainstream sources to bolster those speculations.

Passive But Equal

One of the most contentious issues in current Thelemic discussion is the subject of gender roles in the Gnostic Mass, the central ritual of the O.T.O. Among the questions that are often asked are these. Why do most of the lines, and most of the action, fall to the Priest, with the Priestess relegated to a role that seems secondary? Why is the Lance so much more prominent than the Cup? Why can official O.T.O. Masses feature only men as Priests and only women as Priestesses? Why are all the saints men?

The Address was insulting toward those who believe that Crowley wrote his sexism into the Mass. “I’ve heard the Mass criticized as sexist, and frankly think that stupid. Who, when the Mass was first introduced into North America during World War I, was worshipping the goddess? Especially in the context of religious ceremony of Western origin? Who understood the divinity of the feminine at all?”

The alternative spirituality movement out of which Thelema arose was replete with female deities, and with female leaders acting as mediators to the divine. The Golden Dawn often named its temples after goddesses, and had so many female members that A. E. Waite and other conservative men felt threatened and tried to limit the leadership to Masons. Spiritualism and Theosophy were led by women. P. B. Randolph and the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor treated women as equal partners with men in sex and sex magic, unlike the male-centered O.T.O. Thomas Lake Harris’ sexual mysticism had a great deal to do with his contact with enlightened female spirits. More than a century earlier, Richard Payne Knight had dealt enthusiastically with the erotic rites of various goddesses in his influential book. Crowley himself said that there existed at the time female-led communities of witches (although he criticized them for refusing to have sex with men, or as he preferred to say, “denying to the Holy Spirit the right to indwell His Temple”).¹⁹ Even in the mainstream, Catholicism’s cult of Mary was in full force. The answer to the question is: Within occultism, nearly everyone was working with the divinity of the feminine in Western ceremonies, except Masons — and even there, at the progressive edge of esoteric Masonry and Co-Masonry. To represent the Gnostic Mass as an advance in gender relations, merely for presenting a sacred female, would be

unhistorical.

The presence of a female figure who is treated with deference does not mean that a religious tradition is not sexist. The example of Mary demonstrates this; her prominence hardly makes Catholicism a haven for women's rights. If a ritual indicates that a female character should naturally be subjugated to a man or reduced to stereotypical "feminine" attributes, then her treatment is sexist no matter how high she is placed atop the pedestal (or sat upon the altar).

The practice of staving off an accusation of sexism or racism by pointing to the presence of a member of the oppressed group is known as "tokenism." Is the Priestess being tokenized? We will need to look at her role. Is she presented as naturally subjugated to the Priest? Is she viewed through a veil of stereotype? In the opening the two partners seem roughly equivalent. The Priestess dedicates more time and effort to raising the Priest to his role than he does to raise her to hers, but she really opens the ritual. The ceremony of the Introit belongs to the Priestess, even though it mostly goes to her raising of the Priest. In the central formula, though, the Priest is paramount, performing the critical points VI through VIII nearly solo while the silent, naked Priestess acts only to present this or that tool for his favor, authorize him to reveal her nakedness, and utter with him the word of orgasm once he is ready to shed his sacred blood. As written this seems to be a formula of phallocentricity. The male is the center of the sexual act and woman his functionary, as in other Crowley writings on sex magick.

The Address acknowledges that in the Mass the male "has the largely active role" and the female is passive. In the future there will be an alternative ritual "in which the female takes the more active role and the male the more passive." This seems to be a curious approach to sex. Ordinarily one partner is not active and the other passive.²⁰ Both are active; an unresponsive partner is disliked by all genders and persuasions. It is hard to understand why the O.T.O. would seek to enshrine this odd formula of activity and passivity in its rituals, except in the context of Crowley's Victorian-era view of sex as a male activity done to women.

If the ritual requires one active officer and one passive officer, rather than an active male and a passive female officer, what need is there for a new ritual? Why not just perform a Mass by the script, with women free to assume the role of the active partner and men free to assume the passive? It is current O.T.O. policy that the Priest must be played by a man and the Priestess by a woman. Does the leadership of the Order assert as policy that there are natural and proper roles for men and women?

Holding out hope of a future, "perhaps not soon," in which these questionable roles are reversed in a new ritual "produced by a woman" where there is still a particular part for the woman and a particular part for the man, does not address concerns about the status of Thelemic women here and now, or about gender stereotyping, or about heterocentrism.

The Gnostic Mass raises another issue, which is the list of saints, all of whom are men.

The Address explains that “the Saints are paternal, but this is intentional. It is a list of the small handful of men and man-gods who, in the opinion of the author of the Mass, understood the divinity of woman.” No citation of the author, Crowley, to this effect was provided. The short biographies of the saints presented by the O.T.O.²¹ rarely even touch on this theme, and it’s hard to see how they could, short of contrivance. What do Hermes, Moses, Priapus, Merlin, François Rabelais, Elias Ashmole, Friedrich Nietzsche, or most of the other Gnostic saints have to do with “understanding the divinity of woman?”

The script of the Mass introduces the saints in a way that makes the intent of the author clear. They were not chosen for their respect for female divinity — they were chosen as the champions of the phallus. Addressing the “Lord of Life and Joy, that art the might of man” — that is, the phallus — Crowley describes the saints as the servants of this Lord, those “that did of old adore thee and manifest thy glory unto men”. Women and goddesses are not mentioned, and need not apply. From his description, we could reasonably infer that Crowley wrote an all-male saints list because he believed that the guardians of phallic magick through history had been men.

We are told that “the Order is actively researching female saints; they do not however belong in ‘Liber XV’,” that is, the Gnostic Mass, the central ritual of the O.T.O. No reason is given, and it does not seem that this addition would deface the Mass. Without disrupting the ritual structure, the “Saints” passage of the Collects could be directed to both Lord and Lady, and male and female saints listed together.

Woman’s Sexual Intuition

One of the best-known issues in feminism concerns gender role stereotypes. The traditional social gender ideal holds that there are natural roles for men and women to play in society; and specifically, that men are suited to political, economic, intellectual, and labor roles, while women are relegated to roles such as mother, sex object, domestic, and vessel of a kind of instinctive natural goodness, as opposed to masculine virtue. Much of feminism has revolved around freeing women, and more recently men, from the artificial restrictions on their wills imposed by these roles, and informed people today are suspicious of casual assertions about the natural role of either gender. There may in fact be inherent psychological differences but the subject requires caution.

The Address repeatedly postulates gender roles harmonious with traditional stereotypes. For example, it refers to “women and the particular powers and aptitudes that you possess.” It implies that men cannot understand women, saying of these female powers and aptitudes that “these were questions that Crowley, as a man, could not introspect.”²² With respect to the whore-goddess Babalon, “women have a particular, natural and intuitive understanding of her nature,” and women have “always had a more direct and immediate understanding of sexual mysteries than men.” The Address postulates separate male and female domains of understanding, and the female domain is intuitive and sexual. If some women are unhappy being limited to a feminine mode of knowing, their concerns are not addressed.

The Address says that male and female sexual response are “radically different.... We [men] usually think of sex as something we do ‘out there’ in the macrocosm, whereas for women it is something that literally occurs inside of you, inside your ego-boundaries, within your microcosm, coming in from without.” This statement ascribes feelings to men in general, but as a man, I do not find this to be an accurate description of my perspective. I think of sex as something I do with someone, in which we are both equally immersed, and which is just as much a challenge to my ego-boundaries as my partner’s. I do not think of it as “something I do ‘out there’,” as if I were acting on a passive, receiving object.

What is it for a woman that is “coming in from without”? There seems to be a familiar confusion between sex and a phallus here. A penis may enter a vagina, but sex does not enter a woman from a man. Sex is already in both partners equally, and each brings what they have to the other.

It is curious that the Address presents heterosexual roles and phallic-vaginal sex as psychologically paradigmatic. How does this analysis apply to men, gay or straight, who are accustomed to sex that “literally occurs inside” their bodies? How does it apply to women who make love in ways that do not involve penetration (or envelopment)? Even if we were to accept the idea that sex involving a penis and a vagina makes one partner passive and the other active, what makes this particular form of sex a prototype for the perspectives of all members of each gender and persuasion?

Concerning the roles proper to the different genders, we are told that “the women of Thelema have much to transmit themselves concerning the two traditionally passive weapons [cup and disk], that they are connected to a source. I don’t think that this will come through the media appropriate to the other weapons, such as writing and talking. I think it will come through inculcating a culture of love and understanding and responsible action....” An example explains how women will make this contribution: “I have learned most of what I know of magick... from women I have loved. My first great initiatrix did not consciously try to teach anything, and was in fact entirely unconscious of what she had to transmit. She just knew what to do — I say ‘knew’ in that special feminine sense of that attribute of Binah called Intelligence — not the mimicry and language of the Ruach.”

(The Address uses technical language drawn from the Qabalah. Binah is the third sphere of the Tree of Life, symbolized by the Great Mother or Primordial Sea, which is represented in the human psyche by intuition. Its “Intelligence” is not what we normally think of as “intelligent”; that is, it is neither rational nor verbal. Normal intelligence resides in the Ruach, a lower part of the psyche. Above the feminine intuition of Binah is the masculine will of Chokmah.)

This statement reflects a traditional stereotype of women: they have little to contribute with their “writing and talking,” but much to give of their intuition and their wombs. It is difficult to estimate the chilling effect this statement might have on female members who wish to participate with their intellects rather than their genitalia.

Conclusion

The emergence of gender issues into public discourse within the O.T.O. is a sign of progress. While much discussion has gone on behind closed doors or in the spoken word, until the Address was published there was no serious discussion of these issues in the public record. Gender issues are community issues and it is only in public deliberation that change occurs in the community.

Gender studies are intellectually challenging. In any society, gender roles are pillars of the underlying and largely unconscious matrix of assumptions about social righteousness, which the ancient Egyptians called Ma'at. These roles are so deeply ingrained from infancy on that they are often difficult or impossible to understand from within. For this reason, the field demands careful and critical attention. Researchers in the field need to be familiar with established methodologies and paradigms, whether they accept them or not, and they need to pay careful attention to the methodological and historical errors of the past. With proper caution, the field can be very rewarding.

In the popular imagination, the sexist (like the racist) is a mythical beast, easily recognized but now rarely seen. Leaving the popular mind and taking a few steps down the feminist path, the beast appears everywhere, and self-righteousness becomes one's bosom companion. The budding feminist is secure in the knowledge of personal superiority to the sexist rabble. Just a few steps farther, though, the student comes across a mirror set in the path. The cherished critique wraps around, and we realize that the beast is just as much a part of ourselves as it is part of any other. We are all raised sexist and we all bear assumptions that we may never be able to fully transcend. The path is longer than any of our lives.

Because of this I feel no hesitation in saying that Aleister Crowley was a sexist, any more than I would hesitate to say that I am a sexist, or any other person. The questions in each case revolve around how sexism manifests in the particular case and what can be done to improve the situation. For me, I do less than I could but more than I might. Crowley is dead and I will leave it to spiritualists to help him. I am more concerned with the here and now. Crowley has left us with a legacy colored by his sexism. We can only improve the situation by facing up to these problems and trying to solve them, not by waving them aside.

Thanks to reviewers Renée Rosen, Donald H. Frew, and others. All errors are the responsibility of the author.

END NOTES

1. The Magical Link, Fall 1997 e.v., pp. 8-10.
2. Sigmund Freud, "Infantile Sexuality", Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud (Modern Library).
3. Transformations and Symbols of the Libido, later shortened to Symbols of

Transformation. An English translation was published in 1916 under the title Psychology of the Unconscious.

4. The Law is for All (Tempe, AZ: New Falcon, 1996), p. 147.
5. Symbols of Transformation (Princeton: Bollingen, 1967), p. 135. Jung differs with Freud on the interpretation of “libido,” extending it to “psychic energy” which is not necessarily sexual, although it may be.
6. Oxford English Dictionary, second edition, entries “phallic” and “phallus.”
7. Liddell-Scott Greek Lexicon, entry “phallos”.
8. Magick (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc, 1994), p. 453.
9. Published in 1786. (It is rumored that the publishers were the Friars of Medmenham.)
10. The Book of Lies (New York: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1978), p. 46, “Dewdrops.”
11. Ibid., pp. 82-3.
12. Liber Aleph: The Book of Wisdom or Folly (Level Press, 1972?), p. 91, “De Formula Lunæ.”
13. The Chalice and the Blade (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), and others.
14. The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe, 7000-3500 B.C. (University of California Press, 1982), p. 237.
15. The Language of the Goddess (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991) p. xx. Emphasis added.
16. Magick (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1994), p. 164.
17. The Equinox, vol. I, no. VII (March 1912), pp. 293-354.
18. The Equinox of the Gods (O.T.O., 1936), p. 44. Crowley is writing of himself in the third person, or J. F. C. Fuller is writing authorized biography.
19. Magick , op. cit., pp. 158-9.
20. The complex issue of willed power exchange is beside the point, as it would be difficult to interpret the Mass as an SM ritual.
21. Tau Apyion (Sabazius X°) and Soror Helena, Red Flame #2: Mystery of Mystery (Berkeley: O.T.O., 1995), pp. 119ff.

22. Crowley would have differed on this point, asserting that his natural “hermaphroditism” empowered him to understand women from within, as in his Confessions (London: Arkana Books, 1979, p. 45): “The principal effect [of hermaphroditism] has been to enable him to understand the psychology of women, to look at any theory with comprehensive and impartial eyes, and to endow him with maternal instincts on spiritual planes. He has thus been able to beat the women he has met at their own game and emerge from the battle of sex triumphant and scatheless.” http://maroney.org/Essays/A_Letter_to_Close.html

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A Letter to Close

by Tim Maroney (1999)

(Originally published in the newsletter of Hodos Chameleonis Oasis in Sacramento, California.)

One of the many curious inheritances of the O.T.O. is Liber CI: An Open Letter to Those Who May Wish to Join the Order Enumerating the Duties and Privileges. It is a wide-ranging and ambitious scheme describing what the Order might some day become, but it presents itself as a description of the actual state of the O.T.O. In fact, it never was that, and because our understanding of the goals of the Order has matured, it never will be. Though the document says that it is meant to be read by prospective members to help them understand what they would be joining, it is misleading at best, and may even discourage some of the better potential initiates without some clarification.

The leadership's reverence for tradition has led it into a full endorsement of this document, although a more cautious appraisal is called for. For instance, in Equinox III:10 and on the official web site otohq.org, the Open Letter is introduced as follows:

These regulations first appeared in The Equinox III(1) (Detroit: Universal, 1919) and constitute our best and most comprehensive guidelines for Thelemic social intercourse. Certain provisions will need to be modified to take advantage of the U.S.A.'s comparatively enlightened tax-exemption statutes as applied to religious organizations -- a few are of dubious legality at this writing. Most of the principles outlined herein have long been observed in the U.S. O.T.O. In addition, Equinox III:10 says that:

This Intimation should be closely studied in conjunction with the Constitution, the Open Letter and other relevant papers published in this volume by those who are concerned with the future direction of the O.T.O., in the United States and abroad.

It is normal for the religious to conflate their ideal for themselves with the reality of their groups, and intelligent people know that they should take accounts of a religion by its members with a grain of salt. In this case, though, traditionalism has won out over idealism. The dream of Liber CI is one that few today would share without reservations.

To be sure, there is much in the letter that is pleasant and desirable; for instance, traditional Freemasonic obligations of charity to destitute members are reiterated, and members are promised hospitality while visiting distant locations. At its worst, though, the letter presents the O.T.O. as the one true way above all others, denies human rights to non-members, condemns marriage outside the group, demands that members proselytize, and presents strange and disturbing ideas on child-raising and financial matters. It never described the O.T.O. as it actually existed, and today does not describe where it is going. It is a document of mostly historical interest and should no longer be recommended to potential members as an accurate description of the system of the Order.

I am not a spokesperson for the Order, but I have long been associated with it (about nineteen years at this writing) and I have some knowledge of how it functions. Statements in this essay should not be considered authoritative statements of policy, but my personal observations.

THE OPENING

Let us look at how the letter describes itself. Crowley states his intent clearly enough up front, beginning with an address to his treasurer, George Macnie Cowie:

[S]ome persons who are worthy to join the O.T.O. consider the fees and subscriptions rather high. This is due to your failure to explain properly the great advantages offered by the Order.

This is a peculiar opening. If the letter were to be presented as an actual promise to prospective members, it would be a fraudulent promise. Even more strangely, the treasurer is blamed for not misleading people about the actual nature of the Order, and this accusation of failure is inscribed for all time at the head of an official document. Crowley's relationship with Cowie can be traced in his Confessions and in archival materials. He was prone to fits of temper and to blaming others for his own lack of fiscal savvy. Cowie bore the brunt of his attacks.

This mean-spirited opening by itself is probably enough to put off some potential members. It sets an unpleasant tone that continues throughout. It reminds us that what makes Crowley so interesting is that he was in many ways an obnoxious and immature man, and yet his mystical achievements were remarkable. It reminds us that he was a poor leader, that he did not understand groups very well, and that we study him rather than following or emulating him.

ONE TRUE WAY

The letter presents the O.T.O. as not only one beneficial organization, but as the one true way. Its most notorious passage is this:

Members of the Order are to regard those without its pale as possessing no rights of any kind, since they have not accepted the Law, and are therefore, as it were, troglodytes, survivals of a past civilisation, and to be treated accordingly. Kindness should be shown towards them, as towards any other animal, and every effort should be

made to bring them into Freedom.

This is the stuff of cult-hunters' nightmares made flesh. The letter says that anyone who is not a member of the Order has no rights, and members are instructed that their duty is to treat non-members as having no rights. The leadership today should make clear to prospective members that they are not expected to become bigots. Indeed, we should be doing our best to discourage bigots from joining. I am glad to say that there are few places in the Order today where such intolerance would find itself welcome.

Even if we were Thelemic bigots, the passage is not well thought out. Suppose we were to grant that people who have not accepted Crowley's religious doctrine ("the Law of Thelema") are somehow defective. Should we think that anyone who is not a member of one particular group, the O.T.O., has not accepted that Law? There are many independent Thelemites, as well as members of other Thelemic groups who find the O.T.O. not to their liking. Are they troglodytes as well?

The idea that the Order is uniquely superior to other groups is repeated later on:

The Order teaches the only perfect and satisfactory system of philosophy, religion, and science, leading its members step by step to knowledge and power hardly even dreamed of by the profane. [Emphasis added.]

These passages underscore another contradiction of Crowley: he was a prophet of "Freedom" who had no respect for the rights of others. In his mind he was the divinely appointed benevolent despot of the new world-age. The only liberty worth having was the liberty of obeying him. Our ideas of freedom have advanced in the twentieth century, and people today who are attracted to the freedom promised by the Thelemic system may encounter some cognitive dissonance in engaging Crowley's authoritarian and intolerant ideals. In the minds of the current membership, more advanced ideas of freedom have won out, but respect for tradition has introduced unfortunate compromises and rationalizations. Instead we should have the courage to admit that in this case, tradition is simply wrong.

GO YE FORTH AND CONVERT

Given Crowley's belief in the unique superiority of the O.T.O., we should not be surprised to find the usual cultic concomitant -- an instruction to go forth, spread the word, and bring back converts. Members of the O.T.O. are ordered to proselytize, not only by opening all conversations with Thelemic slogans, but by passing out pamphlets and going on missionary journeys.

The Brethren shall be diligent in preaching the Law of Thelema. In all writings they shall be careful to use the prescribed greetings; likewise in speech, even with strangers. They shall be diligent in circulating all tracts, manifestos, and all other communications which the Order may from time to time give out for the instruction or emancipation of the profane.

He should also do all in his power to spread the Law, especially taking long journeys, when possible, to remote places, there to sow the seed of the Law.

Again, these instructions do not reflect modern consensus. They seem more appropriate to the Moonies than to us. In today's occult and pagan communities, we usually define ourselves by saying that we do not proselytize. We say that we are happy to let those whose interests coincide with ours join us of their own free will. Again the letter does not express a useful guideline for today, but an historical relic from an overzealous founder, and we could expect some of the better potential members to be repelled rather than attracted by it.

Every Brother is expected to use all his influence with persons in a superior station of life (so called) to induce them to join the Order. Royal personages, ministers of State, high officials in the Diplomatic, Naval, Military, and Civil Services are particularly to be sought after, for it is intended ultimately that the temporal power of the State be brought into the Law, and led into freedom and prosperity by the application of its principles. It's hard to know where to start with this one. It is a plain call for theocracy. When Crowley referred to the group as a vessel for "certain social plans" he meant that it was supposed to take over the governments of the world. This is not its intent today and it never had any realistic hope of attaining this regrettable goal. At most it may be a sort of alternative government or "temporary autonomous zone" for its members, who prefer to rely on its own internal processes for interacting with other members. Even those members who wish to see the establishment of a Thelemic theocracy (and there are some) mostly resist the suggestion that the O.T.O. illustrates what such a state would be like.

Beyond this, there is again a sort of social cluelessness here. Any who made themselves such pests with persons of status would soon find themselves disinclined from their company. This "inducement" is not today a duty of membership. The happy result is that those of us with friends of prominence are able to keep those friends, treating them as equals and exerting whatever influence we have on them through the ordinary processes of friendship, rather than by nagging them to join a particular group which may or may not be to their taste.

Every Brother is expected to do all in his power to induce his personal friends to accept the Law and join the Order. He should therefore endeavor to make new friends outside the Order, for the purpose of widening its scope. Not only the powerful, it seems, but every friend whatsoever, is to be regarded largely as potential conversion fodder. Potential members should know that they are not in fact expected to behave in this dehumanizing way.

MIXED MARRIAGE

The letter condemns marriage outside the Order:

It is desirable that the marriage partner of any Brother should also be a member of the Order. Neglect to insist upon this leads frequently to serious trouble for both parties, especially the uninitiate.

This is a relatively temperate form of intolerance by the standards of the letter. We are

not forbidden to marry the "troglodytes" and "animals" outside the Order, only discouraged from doing so.

At the same time, there may be something more than intolerance here. Those who have belonged to magical lodges, pagan covens, and such are aware that for only one partner to be involved can put stress on a relationship. It is easy for suspicions to form when one partner frequently returns home late at night, perhaps smelling of incense and a bit tipsy from the ritual. If the group has something to do with nudism or sex magick, that can make the ground even more fertile for suspicion. Nonetheless, there can be and are many healthy relationships of this type. It helps if both partners are friends with the members, even though only one is a member. There is something to this paragraph, but it could stand to be expressed in a more open and humane way.

Members of the Order may expect to find suitable marriage partners in the extremely select body to which they belong. Community of interest and hope being already established, it is natural to suppose that where mutual attraction also exists, a marriage will result in perfect happiness.

This passage reaffirms a preference for marriage within the group. Its idealistic expectation of perfect happiness in such a union may be forgiven as an excess of optimism. However, it does not reflect the actual course of all marriages between members of the group, which are no more stable or happy than marriages in society as a whole. It promises too much.

MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

The letter's statements on childbirth and child-rearing are among its strangest, and among the least applicable to either past or current practice.

All pregnant women are especially sacred to members of the Order, and no effort should be spared to bring them to acceptance of the Law of Freedom, so that the unborn may benefit by that impression. They should be induced to become members of the Order, so that the child may be born under its aegis.

There is definitely no such outreach program to convert pregnant women in practice, and the prospective member need have no concern that it will be his or her duty to proselytize any pregnant friends. The particular mythic cycle that is celebrated in the Order does revere pregnancy and childbirth as important symbols on both literal and symbolic planes, but we do not today translate that into a program to convert them.

If the mother that is to be have asserted her will to be so in contempt and defiance of the Tabus of the slave-gods, she is to be regarded as especially suitable to our Order, and the Master of the Lodge in her district shall offer to become, as it were, godfather to the child, who shall be trained specially, if the mother so wishes, as a servant of the Order, in one of its Profess-Houses.

The Order does not raise anyone as its special servant. The Master of a Lodge need not be male, which is assumed in the above passage, and I have not heard of any cases of adoption along the lines described.

As for women who have children "in contempt and defiance of the Tabus of the slave-gods," that is a euphemistic way of referring to children born out of wedlock. While the O.T.O. is a radically sex-positive organization and stands against sexual repression as a point of primary doctrine, we simply make ourselves known as such in trust that those of like mind will be attracted or not as they will. We do not establish programs of the sort described above, as if a common act such as having a child out of wedlock could somehow indicate like-mindedness by itself.

(The thought of "Uncle Aleister's Home for Wayward Girls" is not a pleasant one by any means!)

Women of the Order who are about to become mothers receive all care, attention, and honour from all Brethren.

Special Profess-Houses will be established for their convenience, should they wish to take advantage of them.

Special Profess-Houses for the care of women of the Order, or those whose husbands or lovers are members of the Order, will be instituted, so that the frontal duty of womankind may be carried out in all comfort and honour.

"The frontal duty of womankind" is said to be childbirth. Crowley's view of woman as primarily intended for childbirth has been dealt with elsewhere, by Content Love Knowles and others. It is an archaic attitude which does not reflect current consensus.

In addition, there are no houses established for caretaking during pregnancy -- though it is not necessarily a bad idea -- and it would be misleading to let prospective female members think otherwise.

Children of all Brethren are entitled to the care of the Order, and arrangements will be made to educate them in certain of the Profess-Houses of the Order.

Children of Brethren who are left orphans will be officially adopted by the Master of his Lodge, or if the latter decline, by the Supreme Holy King himself, and treated in all ways as if they were his own.

Brethren who have a right to some especial interest in any child whose mother is not a member of the Order may recommend it especially to the care of their lodges or of Grand Lodge.

These statements reflect a communal attitude toward child-raising which I have not seen practiced. Children of Order members are raised according to the usual societal norms in most cases, which means by the parent(s). The Order does not provide children with schooling; there are no provisions even for the "Sunday school" type of religious education of mainstream Christianity. The Order may in some cases practice charity towards orphans left by deceased members, but there is no guarantee of it, and when it does happen it is handled informally. There is no guarantee of adoption, though in a close-knit community of moderate size it would seem a reasonable expectation.

Any adopting parent would not necessarily be the Lodge Master.

MONEY AND PROPERTY

Crowley was accused by his predecessor, Theodor Reuss, of "communistic" ideas, which Crowley angrily denied. However, when we look at his ideas on property, it does seem that he favored the holding of property in common trust. In some ways this is more radical than conventional communism, which only holds that property which is used as "means of production" -- for instance, factory equipment -- should be publicly owned. He also believed that professionals should be obliged to give their services for free to the Order.

None of his ideas about property or profession are currently practiced. Potential members need not be concerned that they will incur obligations of money or services beyond those of dues and voluntary charity.

Every Brother who may possess mines, land, or houses more than he can himself constantly occupy, should donate part of such mines or land, or one or more of such houses to the Order.

Not only is this not practiced, but the Order currently declines all offers of real property, due to administrative overhead and property taxes. While it may eventually become possible for such gifts to be accepted, they are not required, and it would be very surprising if this changed in the future.

All Brethren are bound by their fealty to offer their service in their particular trade, business, or profession, to the Grand Lodge. For example, a stationer will supply Grand Lodge with paper, vellum, and the like; a bookseller offer any books to the Library of Grand Lodge which the Librarian may desire to possess; a lawyer will execute any legal business for Grand Lodge, and a railway or steamship owner or director see to it that the Great Officers travel in comfort wherever they may wish to go.

In a word, no. Crowley was not a professional, unless prophecy is a profession, and did not realize the very serious problems that such requirements would cause. While gifts of professional service are often appreciated, they are not required, and certainly extensive and compromising gifts of the type specified above would be frowned upon. One can only imagine the airline executive's explanations to the Board of Directors!

In sickness all Brethren have the right to medical or surgical care and attendance from any Brethren of the Lodge who may be physicians, surgeons, or nurses.

As for services which are expensive and which everyone needs, such as medical care and legal advice, it is hard to imagine a better way to discourage aspirants of the affected professions than telling them they are to become permanent pro bono caregivers for the entire group. I think it is no accident that we have few members today who are doctors or lawyers. This is unfortunate, because despite what the letter may say, they would not be expected to sacrifice their careers in this manner.

If the Brother so desire, the entire amount of the fees and subscriptions which he has paid during his life will be handed over by the Order to his heirs and legatees. The

Order thus affords an absolute system of insurance in addition to its other benefits. This is not practiced. In my opinion the leadership should take special care, for reasons of liability, to make sure that it does not make false promises of future remuneration of dues.

All Brethren who may fall into indigence have a right to the direct assistance of the Order up to the full amount of fees and subscriptions paid by them up to the time of application. This will be regarded as a loan, but no interest will be charged upon it. That this privilege may not be abused, the Grand Tribunal will decide whether or no such application is made in good faith.

Again, this is not the practice of the Order. It is traditional for fraternal groups to be organized as "benevolent societies," which act as a form of insurance for its members, especially life and burial insurance. The above statements are traditional in that regard and can be traced back to our Freemasonic origins. The O.T.O., however, is not currently organized as a beneficial society or an insurance company, which in my view is just as well. A common complaint about many of the smaller surviving fraternal orders is that they have become nothing but life insurance schemes. Prospective and current members should be aware that their dues and fees are not payments into any kind of insurance fund.

Members of the IX°, who share among themselves the whole property of the Order according to the rules of that degree, may, of course, reside there permanently. Indeed, the house of every Brother of this grade is, ipso facto, a Profess-House of the Order. So, ladies, should you become pregnant, be sure to drop in on the local IX°'s house for a few months of free room and board!

In all seriousness, this is somewhat true and somewhat false. The property of the Order is held by its corporate entity, not by its inner circle. There are no Profess Houses per se in the Order, though there have always been discussions of establishing them. If they were established they would not exist exactly as described in the letter. On the other hand, members of the IX° do administer the Order's property, and do practice some form of personal hospitality which could perhaps be considered a partial implementation of a Profess House. The passage is ambiguously true but largely misleading.

OCCUPATION AND CLASS

The class assumptions of the O.T.O. are derived from Crowley's Victorian background and have little applicability to most of us today.

Personal or domestic attendants should be chosen from among the members of the Order when possible, and great tact and courtesy are to be employed in dealing with them.

They, on their part, will render willing and intelligent service.

While in Lodge, and on special occasions, they are to be treated as Brothers, with perfect equality; such behaviour is undesirable during the hours of service, and familiarity, subversive as it is of all discipline and order, is to be avoided by adopting a

complete and marked change of manner and address.

Reading this merry and unthinking endorsement of traditional English social class discrimination, the modern American is likely to shudder a bit. It is interesting to note how much our ideas of freedom are different from Crowley's, and amusing to observe that he probably thought he was being progressive at the time.

As explained above, Brethren are entirely free of most legal burdens, since lawsuits are not permitted within the Order, and since they may call upon the legal advisers of the Order to defend them against their enemies in case of need.

Again, no one should join thinking they are likely to obtain any free legal advice. The Order does not have crack teams of attorneys ready to spring to its members' defense, and what attorneys it may have among its membership are not required to give pro bono service to other members.

The Order offers great social advantages to its members, bringing them as it does into constant association with men and women of high rank.

I don't know quite how to say this, but in fact the membership of the Order today is not made up of people who are "of high rank," whatever that might mean in this day and age. Just as the phrase "pagan poverty level" has become a commonplace among our relatives in the modern witchcraft movement and its offshoots, we find ourselves largely made up of those who do not share the overarching social values that require money and title as measures of success. Many of us are successful in conventional careers, but I have yet to meet a corporate CEO, a military general, a major celebrity, or the like in the O.T.O. I do not think we are any the worse for this but it seems important to correct the mistaken promise of the letter.

The Order offers extraordinary opportunities to its members in their trades, businesses, or professions, aiding them by co-operation, and securing them clients or customers. There are some career opportunities to be pursued in some bodies of the Order, but not all. The membership has never been large enough to fulfill the promise given here. A business that relied on the O.T.O. to provide customers would soon be forced into bankruptcy. Help in a professional career path, as opposed to the occasional service job, would be a hit or miss proposition given the small size of the membership. One would generally have better chances dealing with other members of one's chosen profession than relying on one's scattered colleagues within the Order.

It is perhaps worth noting here that Crowley never held a regular job, starting adult life as an heir and later living off donations, and it would be unrealistic to expect him to have understood the career potential within a group.

NOT REALLY

There are a few other miscellaneous provisions of the letter which are not practiced.

They shall respond heartily to every summons of the Lodge or Chapter to which they may belong, not lightly making excuse.

In fact, in current practice there is no such thing as a mandatory meeting of a Camp, Oasis or Lodge. Attendance is on a voluntary basis. At least one body has had to be corrected in this regard in recent years.

Colleges of the Order will presently be established where the children of its members may be trained in all trades, businesses, and professions, and there they may study the liberal arts and humane letters, as well as our holy and arcane science. Brethren are expected to do all in their power to make possible the establishment of such Universities.

This is not necessarily a bad idea. Many good universities and colleges have been founded by religious groups. However, it is entirely beyond the resources of the Order at this stage of its development, and I know of no serious plans to put it into effect at any point in the foreseeable future.

The crime of slander, which causes so great a proportion of human misery, is rendered extremely dangerous, if not impossible, within the Order by a clause in the Obligation of the Third Degree.

One could only hope. Sadly, the truth is that this clause has not been effective in banishing slander within the Order. It is impossible to discuss the issue in detail within this forum, but anyone who thinks that by joining they will be effectively protected against the slander of other members is likely to have a rude awakening. That is not to say that slander is commonly practiced, but in any group of religious people, there are some who love to moralize and excoriate, and the O.T.O. is not, unfortunately, the single religious group in human history that has managed to rid itself of this failing. It is a worthwhile goal but if we are ever to achieve it we will have to find a better way than the aforementioned clause.

CONCLUSION

The Open Letter is a historical artifact which should be preserved just as it is, as part of the inheritance of the Order. However, it desperately needs to be placed in its proper context, as representative of Crowley's ideals for what the Order might some day become. If it is presented as an actual set of requirements and promises on the current membership, it is misleading, even fraudulent at places. Its more unrealistic and intolerant passages may have already cost us worthy members, who have read the letter and decided that they would not care to be associated with the imaginary organization described therein. We should set about creating a better description, and relegate this one to the archives where it belongs.

(Author's note: An earlier draft of this essay inspired Sabazius X° to issue a clarification on the current interpretation of Liber CI. His clarification now resides on the O.T.O. web site.)

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[The Freedom of Doubt](#)

by Tim Maroney (1998)
(Originally published in The Scarlet Letter.)

Today we think of skepticism and religion as necessarily opposed. Religion by its nature promotes dogma, and skeptics are above all else dogma's enemies. Is there a way to reconcile these warring siblings, the doubter and the dogmatist? There may be, but we will have to delve deep into the skeptical way to find it. In contrast to modern "debunking" skepticism, classical skepticism has significant points of contact with mystical ideas of post-rational states of mind, and explains a way to be open to religious ideas and trances without believing in them.

Skepticism uses reasoning to deconstruct reasoning, promising a happy state of suspended judgment known as ataraxia. Parallels to ataraxia include mystical enlightenment, the koans of Zen, the undifferentiated awareness of Yogic samadhi, and the English mystic Aleister Crowley's "crossing the Abyss." Crowley is often interesting due to his attempts to reconcile mysticism with philosophy. I will often refer to him here because he describes himself as a skeptical mystic.

The Modes and Slogans

Most of our knowledge of classical skepticism comes from the writings of Sextus Empiricus, the second century CE Greek philosopher, whose *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*¹ summarizes an older system founded by Pyrrho. Sextus writes of the difficulty of being certain of the conclusions of philosophy, and explains the "modes of epochê" (eh-pah-KAY), or methods for suspending judgment. Using these modes one discovers equally plausible alternative ways of looking at dogmatic assertions.

Epochê has aged well. Recent philosophical achievements such as Nietzschean post-moral relativism and Gödel's Theorem find ancient counterparts in the modes, and epochê became an important part of phenomenology, a paradigm of importance to twentieth century psychology and anthropology. Its founder, Edmund Husserl, cast epochê as a state "which completely bars me from using any judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence".²

Sextus gives four lists of modes of epochê. Space permits me to consider only two of the lists (see table 1). The first list gives ten modes. Although the mode of relativity is inconspicuously listed in eighth place, it is the general case of most of the other modes. All things are observed in relation to other things, including relations to their observers, rather than by themselves, and so we can say nothing about how things are in themselves, but only how they appear to be relative to other things.

Associated modes list specific relations between observers and the observed. The first three modes note the role our biological existence has in creating judgments. Animals perceive things differently from species to species, just as the perceptions and interpretations of individual people differ. Sense organs and mental processes produce particular sensations and judgments that conjure only certain relative qualities. We see as red what the dog sees as gray; which is correct? The mode of admixtures notes that

our sensations are made up not only of their apparent objects but of the intervening media, the environment, the sense organs, and the intellect.

Some Modes of Epochê (Table 1)

The Ten Older Modes

The Variety of Animals

Differences Among Human Beings

Differences in the Sense Organs

Circumstances

Positions, Distances and Locations

Admixtures

Quantity and Constitution of External Objects

Relativity

Frequency and Infrequency of Occurrence

Ways of Life, Customs and Laws, Mythic Beliefs and Dogmatic Opinions

The Five More Recent Modes

Disagreement

Infinite Regress

Relativity

Hypothesis

Circularity

Other modes note the relativity between observers in different conditions, such as old or young, hungry or sated, moving or still. There are also relativistic effects from distance, position, and rarity. Form or constitution is a relation that creates disagreement in qualities: the same objects have different qualities in different forms, such as sand which appears rough when scattered, but smooth when formed into a dune. Is sand rough or smooth?

The tenth mode, the mode of "ways of life, customs and laws, mythic beliefs and dogmatic opinions," is a principle of moral relativity, undercutting dogmatic ideas of good and evil. Different cultures disagree on the moral value of particular actions, such as eating with the hands or having sex in public. The more we know about other cultures, the less we can be sure that our own moral judgments are inherently correct.

Next comes a list of five more recent modes. The first is disagreement -- when people disagree about a subject, and there seems to be no clear way of resolving the disagreement, we must withhold judgment. The second mode notes the infinite regress created by resting arguments on assumptions. Every argument necessarily has premises, but an argument is needed to justify those premises, but then that argument has premises which themselves require further justification. This creates a logical absurdity, an infinite regress. Therefore, no argument rests on firm ground. The third mode, relativity, is already familiar. The mode of hypothesis notes that escaping from infinite regress by simply accepting premises without question leaves those premises questionable and the conclusion in doubt.

Finally there is the mode of circularity. This refers to the well-known fallacy of the circular form of argument in which premises are validated by the conclusion. For instance, if we were to say that the Book of the Law is true because it says it is true, and since the book is true its claim about its truthfulness could not be false, we would be reasoning in a circle.

If the modes of epochê are the negative face of skepticism, the slogans are the positive (see table 2). "I withhold assent" and "perhaps and perhaps not" are skeptical responses to "dogmatic statements about the non-evident." "Not more (this than that)" means that there seem to be other ways of looking at the situation. And so for the other slogans.

The Skeptical Slogans (Table 2)

"Not more," "nothing more" -- "not more this than that, up nor down"

"Non-assertion" (aphasia)

"Perhaps," "It is possible," "Maybe", "Perhaps, and perhaps not"

"I withhold assent" -- "I am unable to say which of the alternatives I ought to believe and which not"

"I determine nothing" -- "I am now in such a state of mind as to neither affirm or deny dogmatically the matters in question"

"Everything is indeterminate" -- "There seems no reason to prefer any dogmatic opinion to any other"

"Everything is non-apprehensible" -- "All matters of dogmatic inquiry which I have considered seem to me non-apprehensible"

"I am non-apprehensive" or "I do not apprehend"

"To every argument an equal argument is opposed"

The final slogan is "to every argument an equal argument is opposed." This is given two different interpretations. One is that we ought to try to answer every argument with an opposing argument. Another holds that there is for every argument a sort of anti-argument that destroys it. The latter, if carelessly phrased, would be a dogmatic assertion, since we have not yet heard every possible argument and therefore cannot know whether future arguments may prove stronger than those we have examined so far. Nor do we know whether our belief that we have countered any particular argument will continue to seem accurate, since flaws could lurk within our refutations. For that reason Sextus brackets this interpretation of the slogan with modifiers which, although not among the slogans, are just as often repeated: "it seems to me now" and "of those we have so far examined."

This self-referentiality is one of skepticism's strong points. It is not entirely convinced even of its own method, and instead of creating new dogmas -- for instance, that nothing could ever be proven -- it recognizes that its findings are themselves appearances or seemings, subject to change in the future, and based on a less than complete understanding. Belief is transfigured into a non-dogmatic mode, but we are

not faced with the impossible task of accepting nothing.

Accepting without Belief

Epochê is sometimes translated as "abstention." Is skepticism an ascetic state of renunciation? What do we do after we have deconstructed all certainty? Should we ignore the aching in our bellies as illusory? David Hume complains that Pyrrhonism would lead to a world where "all human life must perish... and men remain in a total lethargy, till the necessities of nature, unsatisfied, put an end to their miserable existence."³ Sextus, however, says this:

The honey appears to us to be sweet. This we grant, for we sense the sweetness. But whether it is sweet we question insofar as this has to do with the theory, for that theory is not the appearance, but something said about the appearance.... Holding to the appearances, then, we live without beliefs but in accord with the ordinary regimen of life, since we cannot be wholly inactive. ⁴

And later,

We follow without doctrinal belief the common course of life and we say that there are gods, and we reverence gods and ascribe to them foreknowledge....⁵

Despite saying that there are gods, Sextus goes on to refute the most important philosophical and theological theories of deity, and expresses a pagan version of the Problem of Evil: the contradiction between the absolutely good and all-powerful nature of deity and the evil in the world. He does not believe in gods but he says that there are gods. I will return to this important point.

We might ask whether Sextus is pulling back from the import of skepticism. Why do we need to eat, drink, and align ourselves with the mores of society, if these things rest on insupportable theories? They don't; ordinary life rests on appearances. Appearances can be called into question, but we might as well accept them in the ordinary course of events. What compelling reason is there to oppose them? The bizarre life of the ascetic is more likely to result from a dogmatic religious theory rather than the skeptic's abstention from statements about the world in itself.

In the essay "The Soldier and the Hunchback," Crowley arrives at a similar conclusion when asking how anything shall stand before the destructiveness of skepticism: "Well, one of the buttresses is just the small matter of common sense." He goes on to explain that although it cannot be proved that his friend Dorothy and her sausage sandwiches even exist, "it's the taste I like."⁶ "Why not be a clean-living Irish gentleman, even if you do have insane ideas about the universe?"⁷

Ataraxia and Enlightenment

Skepticism does not force us to ignore the world around us or to adopt an ascetic way of life. What, then, are these modes and slogans for? They are said to create aporia, a desirable state of bemusement. The intellect is dumbstruck before a wealth of contradictory ideas. By cultivating aporia, holds Sextus, one can attain ataraxia, a state of happiness caused by ceasing to ascribe good or evil values to phenomena.

Is ataraxia a "mystical" goal? That is a matter of definition. It is psychological, not supernatural, but it is targeted at an improvement of the inner life of humanity through mental discipline. The teaching that aporia leads to ataraxia resembles a religious doctrine. Sextus' insistence on the efficacy of the skeptical method in creating happiness may seem to be a weak point in his presentation. Generally he is careful to be skeptical even about skepticism, rarely insisting on the permanence of any assertion or conclusion. Casting skepticism as a way of life with dramatic results in creating personal happiness is uncharacteristically sweeping, perhaps even dogmatic.

One can easily draw parallels between this doctrine and the Buddhist idea of escaping sorrow by detachment from the judgment of conditions as desirable or undesirable. It could also be compared with Crowley's idea of achieving "true wisdom and perfect happiness" by opposing each idea with its contradiction. While each of these doctrines has unique features and it would be a mistake to draw a simplistic equation between them, they have a common thread, an attempt to free the mind of preconceived values by breeding alternative perspectives and loosening rigid value judgments. The result is a type of happy wisdom. This accomplishment, variously called ataraxia, enlightenment, or "exalted degree," cures the disease of dogmatic judgment.

Like any religious doctrine, this one is susceptible to skeptical questions. How do we know that ataraxia exists? Is it permanent or transitory? Does the method of aporia work for everyone? Is ataraxia an achievement or a preexisting personality type? Is the description of the experience accurate? Under what system of values is the state praiseworthy? Since ataraxia seems to be an object of adoration, might its adorer have exaggerated its attributes? If I poke you in the eye with a stick, will you not still cry, enlightened one? Sextus has answers to some of these questions, much as Buddhists do in the Questions of King Milinda, but they are not always convincing in either case.

Crowley's skeptico-mystical text "Liber Os Abysmi vel Da'ath"⁸, describes a philosophical practice purported to lead to a transcendence of rationality, or as Crowley liked to say, "crossing the Abyss."

Let the Exempt Adept procure the Prolegomena of Kant, and study it, paying special attention to the Antinomies. Also Hume's doctrine of Causality in his "Enquiry."... Also Huxley's Essays on Hume and Berkeley... [Etc.] Now let him consider special problems, such as the Origin of the World, the Origin of Evil, Infinity, the Absolute, the Ego and the non-Ego, Freewill and Destiny, and such others as may attract him. Let him subtly and exactly demonstrate the fallacies of every known solution, and let him seek a true solution by his right Ingenium.

Such a skewering of all known philosophies is just what Sextus accomplished in his day with the modes of epochê. Crowley, unlike Sextus, seems to be saying that the mystic should seek new solutions, but the seeker is being set up for failure:

Let then his reason hurl itself again and again against the blank wall of mystery which will confront him.... Then will all phenomena which present themselves to him appear

meaningless and disconnected, and his own Ego will break up into a series of impressions having no relation one with the other, or with any other thing... [His state of insanity] may end in ... his rebirth into his own body and mind with the simplicity of a little child. And then shall he find all his faculties unimpaired, yet cleansed in a manner ineffable.... Hath he not attained to Understanding?
Flowery language aside, having thoroughly experienced the futility of philosophical reasoning, the mystic has been freed from its grip.

The Hindu mantra "neti, neti" ("not this, not this"), which denies the accuracy of perceptions and judgments, is directly negative rather than skeptically detached, but it is similar to withholding assent. Samadhi in Hindu Yoga is the mystical trance of the reconciliation of opposites, or non-duality. Crowley recommends a method of inducing samadhi by conjoining each thought with its contradiction. In *The Book of Lies* he explains that the meditator "enters into his Samadhi, and he piles contradiction upon contradiction, and thus a higher degree of rapture, with every sentence, until his armoury is exhausted, and... he enters the supreme state."⁹ His method recalls the final skeptical slogan, "to every argument an equal argument is opposed." This is a persistent theme of *The Book of Lies*, and its clearest point of contact with skepticism comes in chapter 45, entitled "Chinese Music". I note in [brackets] some parallels with the modes of epochê:

Proof is only possible in mathematics, and mathematics is only a matter of arbitrary conventions. [The mode of hypothesis.]
"White is white" is the lash of the overseer; "white is black" is the watchword of the slave. The Master takes no heed. [The mode of conditions.]

The Chinese cannot help thinking that the octave has 5 notes. [The mode of ways of life, customs and laws.]

The more necessary anything appears to my mind, the more certain it is that I only assert a limitation.

He says in a commentary that in the latter two sentences, "we find a most important statement, a practical aspect of the fact that all truth is relative," the mode of relativity.

The chapter closes with one of Crowley's more recognizable quotes:

I slept with Faith, and found a corpse in my arms on awaking; I drank and danced all night with Doubt, and found her a virgin in the morning.
He comments that "we see how skepticism keeps the mind fresh, whereas faith dies in the very sleep that it induces." Skepticism is presented as a meditative discipline, a vivid spiritual deconstruction of normal modes of belief.

Skepticism in its mystical mode is a quest for a trans-rational state which does not shut out rationality but multiplies thought into a broad and unfettered symphony, without investing any one thought with too much seriousness. While this might not make a poke

in the eye any more pleasant, it could provide both aesthetic reward and a buffer against unpleasant thoughts and sensations. The benefits of ataraxia may be exaggerated, but Sextus's report of a happy result from aporia may yet refer to some real and useful mental state.

Skepticism and Religious Dogma

It is surprising to find common ground between skepticism and religion because religion seems intrinsically dogmatic. Its dubious assertions fall readily before the skeptical scythe. The religious sometimes respond that their beliefs are not dogmatic but experiential. This fails to justify dogmatic interpretations of experiences, though. For instance, it may well be that someone has the experience of conversing with Jesus, but that does not prove the theory that Jesus exists. Similarly, though the trance of samadhi may occur, that does not demonstrate that samadhi redeems us in the next world.

Vivekananda, the well-known Indian mystic (1863-1902), wrote that rationality can serve as a guardian for the mystic.

Stick to your reason until you reach something higher; and you will know it to be higher because it will not jar with reason. The stage beyond consciousness is inspiration (samadhi)... There is no external test for inspiration; we know it ourselves. Our guard against mistake is negative: the voice of reason. All religion means going beyond reason; but reason is the only guide to get there.¹⁰

In ancient India there was a philosophical movement called Câr vâka or Lokâyata, a form of materialism resembling Pyrrhonism in important ways, and much disliked by the religious. Unfortunately this movement's own writings have not survived, but we do possess responses to Câr vâka philosophy in the writings of its many opponents. The Câr vâkas deny the reality and transmigration of the self and the possibility of salvation in another world, which are pillars of mainstream Indian philosophy. These skeptics admit only perception as a mode of knowledge, much as Pyrrhonists accept only appearances. But is samadhi a perception? It seems it must be. A trance is a state of mind, and so it is perceived; it has an appearance and so it can be known.

Did the Câr vâkas accept trances while denying that they involved the invisible soul or âtman, or provided otherworldly redemption? So it would appear from the account of Gunaratna 11, who tells us that the hedonistic Câr vâkas "carry human skulls, smear their bodies with ashes and practice yoga." These skeptical yogins disagree with the conventional sâdhus or holy men who seek redemption through meditation, but they do not deny that they attain pleasure through meditation; they say simply that meditation has no purpose, that "dharma is not superior to kâma," that is, that meditation is no better than the pleasure of the body.

To consider another form of skeptical mysticism, Crowley's essay "The Soldier and the Hunchback" says that we should not waver from asking any reasonable question, but once we have done so we will find the questions turning into answers as we climb the spiritual ladder. Employing the (awkward) metaphor of question marks as hunchbacks and exclamation points as soldiers, he says:

It takes a moment for a hunchback to kill his man, and the farther we get from our base the longer he takes. You may crumble to ashes the dream-world of a boy, as it were, between your fingers; but before you can bring the physical universe tumbling about a man's ears he requires to drill his hunchbacks so devilish well that they are terribly like soldiers themselves. And a question capable of shaking the consciousness of Samadhi could, I imagine, give long odds to one of Frederick's grenadiers.¹²

As Crowley implies, it seems likely that the average skeptic does acquire some belief in the power of the tools of questioning. However, he goes too far in trying to cast the modes of epochê as positives: a question is only a question. Crowley makes two mistakes. First, he believes without question in the theological model often known as the Great Chain of Being (though he does not call it that) by which existence is ordered from the most to the least sacred. Crowley's Qabalistic ladder stretches from the hellish Qliphoth through the fields we know up to the ultimate Kether of Yetzirah and the Veils of Negative Existence. This model is a cosmological dogma and it is easily thrown into doubt by simple application of the modes of epochê. Without the ladder, there is no basis for believing in a transformation of questions as we climb.

Second, Crowley is emotionally driven to find a way out of questioning and into certainty, while the Pyrrhonist sees questioning as a pleasant state sufficient unto itself. Again and again in the essay he expresses his desire that questions marks should turn into exclamation points: "we may now resume our attempt to drill our hunchback into a presentable soldier," "wouldn't it be jolly if our own second ? suddenly straightened its back and threw its chest out and marched off as ! ?", and so on. Elsewhere he says that "doubt is a good servant but a bad master"¹³. He wants to have absolute conviction in a religious system yet still be a skeptic.

This desire for certainty led him to create a dogmatic religious system. The definition of his magical order A.∴ A.∴ contains this belief requirement:

All members must of necessity work in accordance with the facts of Nature... So must all Members of the A.∴ A.∴ work by the Magical Formula of the Æon. They must accept the Book of the Law as the Word and the Letter of Truth, and the sole Rule of Life. They must acknowledge the Authority of the Beast 666 and of the Scarlet Woman as in the book it is defined, and accept Their Will as concentrating the Will of our Whole Order. They must accept the Crowned and Conquering Child as the Lord of the Æon, and exert themselves to establish His reign upon Earth. They must acknowledge that "The Word of the Law is Thelema" and that "Love is the law, love under will."¹⁴

A skeptic would respond simply "maybe, and maybe not."

Despite his skeptical meditation practice, Crowley believed that his particular religious doctrine was an absolute truth and that it was merely a mistake to disagree with it. We can also easily find evidence of dogmatism in Buddhism and Hinduism, despite their elements of skepticism. Dogmatism is tempting. There seems to be something in us that draws us toward conviction in the non-evident. Even Sextus seems to have a system of thought that rests on the non-evident proposition that aporia leads to ataraxia. We find a

comfort in certainty and an anxiety in doubt, and so we love systems of religion and philosophy. Their self-assured dogmas give us a feeling of place in the universe and of participation in an overarching order.

Should we resist this tendency? Is Sextus wrong in maintaining that suspension of judgment will make us happy? Do we need to be certain of things? Is this need so strong that it can justify holding mistaken beliefs, such as the belief that God lives in the sky, or that diseases are caused by malevolent spirits, or that Buddha remembered all his millions of past lives, or that Vishnu was born as a fish, or that our courses on earth have been foreordained by the True Will? Shall we simply accept that credulity is necessary to our happiness and forget that our pet dogmas are probably false?

The answer is a matter of degrees. We might not believe that Vishnu had ever been born as a fish, but we could find some wisdom in the story of this scaly avatar, as we might in any fiction, and so our reaction to the story could be accepting while not believing. We know from Kuhn that science is an unreliable social process, but still we accept galaxies and molecules. There are many degrees of belief and many types of acceptance. To be a dogmatist is not simply to act as if any statement has value but to insist that some non-evident insistence about the world is definitely and lastingly true.

The ancients knew that affirming the value of a myth does not require affirming its accuracy. Plutarch, for example, insists on a nonliteral but positive interpretation of Egyptian myth: "We must not treat legend as if it were history at all, but we should adopt that which is appropriate in each legend in accordance with its verisimilitude,"¹⁵ that is, symbolically, in the way that myth resembles the world. Perhaps this non-literalistic affirmation is what Crowley meant by his apparently dogmatic A. . . A. . . belief requirement? Perhaps we must be willing to act as if these myths were true, even though we do not believe in them? Unfortunately, no. In a footnote to the passage above, he addresses the conflict between freedom of thought and doctrinal mandate:

This is not in contradiction with the absolute right of every person to do his own true Will. But any True Will is of necessity in harmony with the facts of Existence; and to refuse to accept the Book of the Law is to create a conflict within Nature, as if a physicist insisted on using an incorrect formula of mechanics as the basis of an experiment.

This is an exhortation to literal belief, not deliteralized mythic engagement. It is a fact of Nature that the Book of the Law is the scripture appointed for humanity in this Æon. No skeptics need apply.

In Crowley's other magical order, the Ordo Templi Orientis, applicants to the first degree of initiation sign a form affirming that they accept the Book of the Law. This is a modern requirement dating only from the late 1970's and early 1980's.¹⁶ Because of the use of the term "accept," the form may derive from the A. . . A. . . passage above, but it has a more liberal interpretation -- it is taken to mean only that the applicant does not wish to publish a changed edition, which is a peculiar reading of "acceptance" of scripture. The fact that the acceptance requirement has been reinterpreted is interesting. It shows that

the current membership is less comfortable with dogmatism than Crowley was, and is willing to make space for deliteralized but still positive interpretations of scripture. Today's membership rebels at aspects of Crowley's dogmatism.

This liberal reinterpretation is a work in progress. While a bald dogmatic statement requiring belief in a particular book is unpalatable today, other pillars of Crowley's system are still widely granted the status of fact by his followers. The two most prominent dogmas are True Will and the procession of the Æons.¹⁷ Neither of these primary dogmas are viewed simply as myths or fictions; instead they are regularly asserted as fact. Yet neither one is well supported by evidence or argument, nor are they phenomenological truths like the experience of samadhi. They are believed on faith. As myths their value is beyond skepticism's power, but as assertions of truth they are vulnerable to the modes of epochê.

Sextus' observation of the skeptical attitude toward gods -- to accept their traditional attributes and yet withhold belief -- shows one way out of this dilemma. We need not condemn the ideas of the Æons or of True Will; we need only to "bracket" them (in Husserl's phrase), to place them within their context where they can provide spiritual sustenance without degenerating into dogma. Skeptics within a mystical or magical tradition are free to frame its myths as the fictions they are. Doubt is not a constraint -- it does not forbid us from exploring the beauties of the spirit, as some modern-day "skeptics" believe. Instead, skepticism frees us to plunge into the profound depths of myth and trance, without concern that we will be blinded by their wonders.

Notes:

1. I have relied throughout on the recent critical edition of Benson Mates, *The Skeptical Way* (Oxford University Press, 1996). I have also consulted the Loeb edition.
2. Joseph J. Kockelmans, ed., *Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretation* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1967), pp. 77-8; see also Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1991), p. 44.
3. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 1748. Harvard Classics (New York: Collier, 1910), vol. 37, sec. XII, p. 416.
4. Mates, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
6. Aleister Crowley, "The Soldier and the Hunchback", *The Equinox*, Vol. I, No. I, March 1909, pp. 122-3.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
8. *The Equinox*, Vol. I, No. VII, March 1912, pp. 77-81.

9. Aleister Crowley, *The Book of Lies* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1978), cap. 11, p.33. Also see caps. 31 and 39. Orig. 1913.

10. Vivekananda, *The Yogas and Other Works* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekanda Center, 1953), p. 546. From the "Inspired Talks," 1895.

11. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, ed., *Cârvăka/Lokâyata : An Anthology of Source Materials and Some Recent Studies* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1990), pp. 266-78. I am indebted to Mordecai Shapiro for referring me to Indian skepticism.

12. "The Soldier and the Hunchback", p. 128.

13. *The Book of Lies*, ch. 45, p. 100.

14. Aleister Crowley, *Magick in Theory and Practice*, app. II, pp. 240-1.

15. Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, 374E; F. C. Babbitt, tr., *Moralia* (Harvard University Press, 1936), p.139.

16. Personal e-mail from Bill Heidrick, September 8 and 9, 1998. "It's mainly from Grady [McMurtry]'s time, with some minor variations in language since. Gross and deliberate misquotes from Liber AL had appeared in print (e.g., in a Level Press unauthorized edition of Liber Aleph and other places). The original reason for the requirement was to conserve the text without such alteration."

17. There are also other prominent but less central dogmas, such as the accuracy of the Tree of Life model of the universe as interpreted by Crowley and the Golden Dawn; the reality of reincarnation, chakras, Secret Chiefs, and incorporeal spirit beings; the ancient descent and unique power of a particular sex magick formula; and the efficacy of thaumaturgy, divination, numerology, astrology and initiation. Skeptical questions about these dogmas are not frequently raised in the Thelemic community. I hope to address some of them in detail in future columns.

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Why I Study Magic

by Tim Maroney (1998)

This essay is an exercise in introspection. A friend recently asked me, "Why are you into magic?" There is no single answer. I will try to explore various motivations, both my own and what I imagine others' to be.

Intellectual Exploration

I am motivated by a quest for knowledge, that is, by curiosity. I'm an intellectual type and I like to be able to formulate clear ideas about things. My spiritual experiences are

very hard for me to understand. I don't even have a good concept of the scope of the subject. What is the spiritual? Is it a group of psychological faculties? Or an arbitrary semantic convention that conflates dissimilar phenomena? Is it a value judgment masquerading as an observational category? Or does it indicate some underlying psychological or metaphysical reality around which we revolve, whether we know it or not?

I can't answer these questions. They may not ultimately be answerable, because spirituality seems to take us outside the realm of reason. However, by doing ritual and meditation by myself and with others, and observing in a phenomenological mode - that is, accepting mental phenomena as real without regard to their accuracy or defensibility - I feel that I am getting closer to understanding parts of the continuum of spirituality. At least I am asking better questions than I used to. My curiosity about the spiritual has become a goal in its own right, whether or not this curiosity furthers my own spiritual development; the spirit has become a subject for psychology.

Largely as a result of my interest in spiritual experience, I have become interested in related subjects, such as the history of occultism and the social dynamics of spiritual groups. I find that spiritual practice and group membership provide useful resources and observational opportunities to further these studies.

This is all very interesting, at least to me, but by itself it is only "the dogs of reason." There is more.

Spiritual Practice

My interest in magic is not from the armchair, at least not exclusively. I meditate, I do yoga, I attend and perform various rituals by myself and in groups, as well as reading voraciously in occult, pagan, and philosophical subjects and in general religious studies. Why would anyone spend time on such apparently futile activities? From the outside it's all a lot of mumbo-jumbo.

One of the popular answers among ceremonial magicians these days holds that "I'm a trance junkie," or "I'm a ritual junkie," or words to that effect. The meaning is "I derive pleasure from the effects that ritual practices have on me and so I seek them out." This formula would be part of my answer, but I wouldn't characterize myself as a "junkie": I like to modify my consciousness but it's not the central axis of my life and I don't depend on it (at least, I don't think I do).

Many traditional mystics would be appalled at the "ritual junkie" idea. It contrasts with traditional ideals of redemption through spiritual practice and says simply, "it feels good, so I do it." However, many traditionalists also hold out ideals of redemption that fall onto the reward-punishment spectrum, such as eternal bliss or perfect happiness. The simple rewarding nature of spiritual practice, the fact that it induces pleasurable mental states, is the Great Unspoken (or Nietzschean pudenda) of mystical theory. It's a motivation that mystics have always had but wouldn't admit to, or that they held at arms' length by issuing stern warnings against it. If the pleasure principle turns spiritual

practice into a kind of masturbation, I would answer that we're no longer so opposed to the art of self-pleasure.

Still I think there is more to spiritual practice than pleasurable diddling. When I first got involved with magic in my mid-teens it had a lot to do with psychedelic drugs. My goal in magic and meditation was to trip without chemicals, and I still enjoy that when it happens (say, from a good hatha yoga session), but I've also come to share the concern that this can be a kind of "spiritual materialism," to use Chogyam Trungpa's term. Getting off is good but it's distinct from and may sometimes even be in opposition to spiritual progress. Even with drugs there's more going on than direct reward through bliss. Basic assumptions about the world and the self are thrown into a different light from which they may be re-examined, where before they were not even recognized as assumptions, but thought to be facts. The process by which we create our personal image of the world is illuminated and the limits of our consciousness are shown to be self-imposed; we are exposed to "other forms of consciousness completely different," as William James wrote of his nitrous oxide experiences. This has the potential to broaden our mental scope, just as travel broadens our social ideas.

Another Great Unspoken about spiritual practice is ego. Just as it's pleasant to one's self-image to be distinctly strong of body, so it is to be strong of mind. The self-esteem benefits of exercise are desirable but they often go too far. I've grown tired of "magic jocks" who measure their self-worth by the intensity of their ritual power. The size of one's muscles is no measure of physical health, and "roaring like a blast furnace" in ritual is no indication of mental health. In fact people can seriously hurt themselves by going ruthlessly for maximum strength. Some strength is good; for some people a lot of strength is good; but health is more a matter of overall balance, flexibility and tone than of ultimate capacity in one area. When someone is devoted heart and soul to a particular system of spiritual symbols there may be a tremendous ritual power in that, but perhaps the system itself becomes one of those unexaminable assumptions, Blake's "mind-forg'd manacles we bear," that spiritual practice ought to be helping us deconstruct. Quietism is a bit namby-pamby but to be a mighty dragon ever thundering also has its problems.

Personal Development

"Spiritual progress" is an important concept to me but I find its meaning elusive.

I am not drawn to traditional ideas of initiation. In systematized magic or mysticism spiritual progress is divided into initiatic levels, or numbered stages of progress. I can't accept these scales of development, including the binary scale of enlightenment or non-enlightenment. People are not numbers and if you tell me "so-and-so is a third degree" you have told me exactly nothing about them. These systems and distinctions are too impersonal, and too many people seem to be hurt by them rather than helped. No one is more unenlightened than those who are convinced of their enlightenment.

A similar scale is that of salvation, where a person is saved (1) or unsaved (0). To me there is entirely too much emphasis on redemption in traditional scales of progress

whether they use the words "redemption" and "salvation" or not. The "first matter" or non-initiate in traditional magic is held to be utterly worthless: blind, fettered, desperately in need of the system to show him or her the light. Obviously this is insulting and serves the purpose of maintaining hierarchical social structures. Just as obviously, though, there is some metaphorical truth to it. Relative to the later and developed state, the earlier and undeveloped person is burdened by blinders that look like glasses, and hobbled by chains that feel like shoes. More than how we look at others, this is how we look back at ourselves.

The problems for me in the black-and-white version of the metaphor are that this conflates different people's relative states, and requires self-loathing on the part of the initiatory candidate. If we had a way to measure someone's illumination - which we don't - I think we would find that many perfectly ordinary uninitiated people are less deluded than many seekers who have been strenuously applying themselves to the mystical path for years. A confident and healthy person would find little appeal in being superior to everyone else because of initiatory ceremonies, but among "initiates" one constantly encounters just this demeaning attitude. Similarly, a healthy person who found that a system demanded abject self-abasement to questionable "superiors" would probably select themselves out in short order. These hierarchical formulae appeal most strongly to people who - to be blunt - already hate themselves, find their negative self-image confirmed by being treated as the worthless "first matter" of the art, and achieve comfort in having the onus of their low self-esteem displaced onto "uninitiates."

I find better company in people who are not plagued with unreasonable self-doubt and who recognize and work with their strengths. I wish our spiritual systems selected for them instead of weeding them out. American hatha yoga instruction has gone in this direction, though once one moves on to more spiritual limbs of yoga the old demeaning hierarchies tend to reassert themselves. More needs to be done in reforming the teaching of meditative practices.

I am only describing a general trend and not tarring all initiates with this brush. I am an initiate myself, though once again it is not the axis of my life. I simply want to express that I would be more comfortable with spiritual systems that start with the basic strength and insight the person already has and develop that, rather than starting with the need for redemption. A better metaphor than removing a blindfold would be teaching the initiate how to make binoculars. I think groups starting without the "original sin" of the "first matter" would be less likely to attract neurotics and exaggerate their neuroses, and so less prone to the infighting that wracks magical groups.

So I will move on to my personal idea of my progress. Although it is tangible to me, I have a hard time saying exactly what it is. I know it has resulted from psychotherapy, from yoga, and from re-examining and redefining my assumptions, especially assumptions about relationships with others and with the external world in general. There is an aspect of self-knowledge and self-acceptance, a willingness to express myself spontaneously and embrace my feelings rather than trying to manipulate myself, an emergence of a mental quiet space, a recognition of personal patterns which

previously were unconscious or denied, and a number of specific personal advances that result from being freed from unexamined patterns and from a distaste for myself. There's a long way to go and there may not be any end to the path, or it may be that the path is longer than I could walk in this one lifetime (so far as I know, the only one I have), but I know I am on this path and have come a certain way so far.

Magic in the sense of ritual has not been all that useful to me in this kind of progress and I have come to distrust it as affording a scope for acting out and for compensatory ego-inflation. That is, the intentional nature of ritual may unconsciously enact a neurotic pattern while rewarding limiting patterns I would do better to transcend. When I do ritual now, on the other hand, erosion of my mental blocks and acceptance of my aspirations have made ritual more effective in transforming my consciousness than it used to be. So ritual magic is related in some way to spiritual progress and may at some future time become more of a vehicle of my development than it is for me now.

I am attracted to an exercise model of development, in contrast with grandiose conceptions of redemption and ascension through spiritual degrees. Concentration, imagination, steadiness, even power are useful things to have. My analogy to physical exercise is deliberate: there is value to "spiritual bodybuilding" so long as it doesn't degenerate into vain self-admiration. Where a traditional conception would hold, for instance, that "by ascending the Ladder of Lights the devout seeker may be admitted into the innermost Mystery that maketh man God," under the exercise model one would say "by practicing mental disciplines one strengthens, balances and cleanses mental faculties." Yoga obviously fits this model, even in its highest limbs; classical yoga scripture depicts the ultimate goal pragmatically as the stilling of thought-waves. Psychotherapy is also a fairly good match, where the faculty exercised is spontaneous introspection. Ritual magic exercises the abilities of concentration and visualization, as well as the ability to transform perceptions of space, and a host of others. This too is a kind of progress.

Mystery

I don't mean to sell short transcendental models of progress. I'm uncomfortable trying to reduce, for instance, my devotions to Hecate or Pan to mere exercises meant to strengthen whatever parts of the nervous system are involved in bhakti. There is something missing from the exercise model but the usual metaphysical models are vapid and do nothing to satisfy my intellectual desire for understanding. Still I must attend to the fact that "reason is a lie; for there is a factor infinite & unknown; & all their words are skew-wise" (to quote Crowley's "devil or angel" Aiwaz.)

Mystical experience deconstructs ordinary modes of thought and makes us aware of the fragility of intellectual concepts. The best scientific models appear as frail girders strung out thinly through an immeasurable abyss. Existence is biological, not intellectual - even inanimate matter or empty space is more richly layered and subject to more powers and forces than we could ever hope to enumerate. No idea ever truly captures any phenomenon.

It is a mystery why intellect works at all, or what it means to say that it works. No one knows what "natural laws" are and scientists have mostly given up on the question. It's possible to create mathematical theories that mechanically generate predictions that turn out to be more or less accurate within their very limited domains. We don't know what the accuracy of a prediction means or what it means to measure the results of an experiment or why equations should make accurate predictions. These questions continue to baffle philosophers, who have turned to petty squabbling over inconsequential ramifications of their pet notions. Two millenia have passed and no one knows how to answer Pilate's question. What is truth? We just make theories, measure their results, and stick with the ones that make predictions we find useful or interesting. We imagine we are being "rational" when we are following instincts that we may never understand.

In me these intellectual instincts are relatively strong and so I seek a psychology of the spiritual, but I know it will always fall short of the living whole that is spirituality in the real world. So I am not obsessed with turning every experience rational. Paradoxically, too much focus on the rational would undercut the rational approach to psychology that is called phenomenology, which accepts mental phenomena in themselves without judging them by a standard of intellectual accuracy. To seek a spiritual experience is to seek a full experience, not an equation. The experience is "organic" in that it is deeply layered, ever-changing as a fundamental characteristic of its existence, subject to a non-enumerable set of subtle interconnections and dynamics, and rich with odd resonances and self-similarities that suggest meaning without explaining it. By contrast an intellectual theory is cold, static, simple, declarative, and dry.

The heights of philosophy are less intellectual than spiritual. They convey in prose poetry an opening to the organic experience, a transcendence of the plodding and ordinary, a new world of cognition with unfathomable breadths and depths. That they do this while appearing rational is another mystery. Here is where philosophy becomes a true quest for wisdom and escapes the trivialities of the academy, and gives me a reason to study it.

Of course every experience is organic, a deeply complex play of patterns in the nervous system. What distinguishes everyday experience from spiritual experience? One model, expressed most clearly by Naranjo and Ornstein but derived from Eastern philosophy, and easily discernible in Blake, is that we are prone to filter experience down to its dregs, leaving only a pale shadow of the original. That is, our everyday experience is deliberately de-organified, with "nonessential" details removed so that we can concentrate on "relevant" information. Spiritual experience results from lowering these filters, which requires control of the faculty of attention, which requires exercise.

There are other means. Psychedelic drugs can be used to disable filters, but this is not a method I use much these days. I've learned to compensate for them now and they don't scramble the filters the way they used to. (I can't use nitrous oxide as an anesthetic either - I'm a savvy enough tripper to recognize pain, thank you very much.) Ritual uses symbolism to gain control of the faculty of attention and ceremonial magic

uses visualization to develop this control, and so ritual magic can be used to break through to the symphonic or organic experience. Nature in all its fractal depth is also evocative of organic experience, and while I do not currently practice Thoreau's walking method of transcendental meditation I hope to start.

It would be sad to find that spirituality is just activation of the neurological "spirituality circuit" and I don't think that's likely to happen. There are no final answers to questions this complex. But it's likely that there are neurological correlates to spiritual experience, and finding them may create a bizarre (perhaps Gigeresque) fusion of technology and spirituality. At the worst, we'll be able to cook up better drugs; at the best, we'll provide people with willed technologies for spiritual activation, perhaps through bioengineered glial cells or such.

Magic Per Se

Many ritualists and mystics would postulate another mystery, that the inner experience controls the outer under certain circumstances. This would explain psychic powers and spell casting. I don't believe in these things, though my opinion isn't set in stone. I've seen many remarkable coincidences but I believe that is what they are, although often they are so striking I think there must be some mysterious connecting factor. I sometimes do rituals for particular purposes but I don't expect the result to happen "supernaturally"; it's more like voluntary self-programming, or even just an acting out of commitment. I do these purposeful rituals rarely as I generally feel I have my life reasonably well under control and I don't need to rely on magic. For instance, on those rare occasions I can't make a choice rationally, I may do a divination using the Yi Jing. My ordinary purpose in ritual and meditation falls under the exercise model. The organic experience sometimes comes spontaneously in the course of exercise and I rarely try directly to induce it - though if it comes I'm likely to repeat the exercise!

Groups

Finally the subject turns to spiritual groups. Like many of my friends, I have concerns about the intellectual stagnation of the members of these groups, particularly in the occult and pagan communities with which I have the most acquaintance. They claim not to be dogmatic but their members share many unexamined assumptions which they defend with intense hostility when they are called into question, however politely or reasonably. Systems of belief are seductive. I am frightened they will seduce me and repelled when I see others who have been seduced. Looking back on my personal history I can remember times that I fell into rigid systematization and I am ashamed. It's very satisfying to have all the answers but it chokes off the potential for independent thought. Now I am determined to embrace my own ignorance and the intrinsic ambiguity of the world, without abandoning my quest for knowledge.

Groups are hard for me because of my idiosyncracies. People become hostile because of my heretical positions on issues that are close to their hearts. In addition, I find much of the ritual work in these groups is so poorly done that it enters the realm of the patently offensive, like superhero comics or situation comedies. Finally I have personal mental blocks about group membership that derive from my intellectual distance from

other children in school and the utter divergence of my interests - mostly scientific at the time - from theirs. I do not expect to fit in and in some ways group integration is a very threatening unknown. I admit that I have been known to act out when I seem to be starting to integrate, which does not always make me the most pleasant company. It takes a lot for me to admit that I like to have a group of friends. Given all this, one would think that I would avoid groups altogether, and for years of my life I have. During the current decade (the 1990's) I have been closer, though. There have even been a few months of heavy involvement here and there. Why?

In brief I know of three reasons. One is educational. I learn about spirituality through contact with others. Topics of study include ritual practice, social dynamics and the role of belief. I learn about methods I would otherwise never encounter, or only read about. I am an O.T.O. member at the moment because it gives me an opportunity to observe and take part in rituals due to its relatively liberal admission policies; if not for that I might never have a chance to study initiation, which is so important to many people.

The second is social. While I might at times deny it, there is something compelling about fraternal dynamics, something more than hanging out with one's friends, even though it is also that. I do not understand this very well yet but I only have the opportunity to study it by belonging to a group. In addition, there is a great range of variation, and I sometimes meet wonderful people who share my unusual interests. I don't know where else I would meet such people.

I suppose I would lump the sexual in with the social. Almost all my girlfriends have had some occult or pagan involvement. Given my own degree of personal involvement and the general social prejudice against occultism there might be problems otherwise. I don't know where else I would meet suitable partners. But perhaps this assumption reflects some insecurity in myself. I'm a pretty reasonable and accomodating person and could probably come to terms with any spiritual person, occult or otherwise.

Third and last there is the experiential aspect of spirituality in groups. This differs from solitary practice in many ways. In the past I hoped for some balance to my natural reclusiveness by matching solitary practice with group practice, but I have found over time this is based on something of a false distinction, and I no longer feel motivated by the idea of equilibration. This is only a quest for external redemption. So what is different and worthwhile about ritual in groups?

A good group ritual can transform the space more powerfully than most solitary rituals. Something about the group affirmation of the change of space brings in a whole new dimension that is only rarely attained in my private rituals. The energy is thick, hanging almost palpably in the air. This is a remarkable experience and often a very rewarding one. (I feel embarassed by admitting this, as if I should defend my solitary practice, which does transform space. Perhaps I err in saying that group ritual transforms space more, rather than differently.) A bad group ritual, though, can evoke revulsion and offense, whereas a bad solitary ritual is usually only disappointing. I don't have bad trips in solitary ritual or meditation, but I can leave a poorly-done group ritual absolutely

furious. In any case, the range of ritual experiences is expanded in groups and so is my understanding as a participant-observer.

Conclusion

There are no doubt a dozen reasons I am leaving out or would not admit to myself. I find that after almost five years of psychotherapy I still can find it hard to discuss my feelings simply and straightforwardly, especially about matters I have such strong feelings about. I hope some of this makes sense and perhaps, my patient reader, even helps you understand some of your own reasons by contrast or comparison with mine. See you in circle!

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The Problems of Syncretism

by Tim Maroney (1997-8)

"Syncretism" is a technical term in religious studies describing the combination of one mythic figure with another from a different tradition. Syncretism has been practiced from ancient times to the modern day. During the Ptolemaic rule over Egypt, many syncretistic deities were created, such as Hermanubis, a combination of the Greek Hermes and the Egyptian Anubis. Later, during the Graeco-Roman mystery period, syncretism became common within the mystery traditions, the rituals of which often featured prayers which stated that a particular deity had many other names, and listed those names. Syncretism is an inevitable consequence of internationalism and it is not surprising that syncretism has become a common part of the new occult and pagan religions of today's multicultural world.

Sometimes syncretism seems to go too far. For instance, in Neo-Pagan Witchcraft and related modern occult traditions, it is said that "all gods are The God and all goddesses are The Goddess." The theory of the religion is that a Goddess and a God ruling over the world in a marital union and producing all phenomena. This has often been criticized as reducing all the characters of world myth to mere gender attributes, submerging their individual complexity in an overarching doctrinal agenda. In another case, the Golden Dawn, an influential occult group of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, combined Egyptian deities with Hebrew divine names from the Bible and other sources. In fact, as most people know, there is no small amount of historical animosity between the ancient Egyptian and Hebrew traditions. You wouldn't invite them to the same party, so how can they both be at the same ritual - more, even conflated, so that an Egyptian and Hebrew name are seen as synonymous?

The ancient Greek and Roman syncretists were often just as insensitive and poorly informed, and their practices of assimilation are largely responsible for the disrepute in which syncretism is held today in the academic community. The academic response, however, is starting to become less dogmatic, or at least more readily challenged, as in Kingsley's recent book on Empedocles(1), or the concerns raised by Robert F. Campany in his comparison of the ancient Chinese sage Xunzi with the pre-modern

mythic theorist Durkheim(2).

The new critique, self-referentially including scholarship itself among its subjects, notes that it is just as much an error to hold religious practitioners to the criteria of current scholarship, and to derogate their efforts for their inevitable failure to satisfy as-yet-uninvented criteria, as it is to dismiss the efforts of traditional commentators to understand their own ritual and mythic practices. Both these naive critiques of traditional religious philosophy depend on ill-founded assumptions about the unique superiority of current scholarly methods and viewpoints.

In syncretism as practiced either in ancient or modern times we find conflation which are meant to be taken as literal statements about an underlying substrate of symbolic commonality. That is, the connection between, say, the Egyptian Osiris and the Qabalistic Tiphareth, is presented as a longstanding fact which has always been true, even if it was not well known. Many occult syncretisers claim that a connection such as this was always known by a secret group of initiates who have only now cleared this mystic truth for public release(3). Judged as comparative religion or textual analysis this sort of assertion is defective. It is therefore tempting to dismiss syncretism as a failed attempt at amateur scholarship.

If we look at what these commentators are trying to accomplish in context, however, we wind up at a different model. Although a claim of traditionalism is made, new myths are being created. Specifically, the myth of syncretists is that all known myths are only differentiations of a single unifying primordial myth, sometimes called the Secret Doctrine. This type of universalist myth can be found not only in occult and Neo-Platonic sources, but in Freemasonry, Baha'i, pre-modern comparativism, popular Roman attitudes towards foreign gods, and so forth. The myth that Osiris is an expression of Tiphareth deserves the same deference that the observer gives to any other myth, and its faux historical content is no more a matter for concern than, say, the fact that Pandora was not really the first woman. These are the terms on which syncretistic statements need to be engaged: as expressions of the myth of a common system behind the appearance of diversity in myth and ritual.

(There is a risk of condescension in this reinterpretation. Writers like Blavatsky and Crowley really believe that they are contributing to comparative religion, and letting them off the critical hook by transposing their writing to a new domain - that of myth-making - derogates their own account of their intent. However, the fact is that when judged by the standards of fields like anthropology, religious studies, or even philosophy, their work fails to make much of a contribution. We can take them at their face value, and so be forced to dismiss their work completely because it does not succeed in the scholarly arena, or we can try to recognize that there is a difference in intention between their work and scholarly work, and so recognize its value with respect to its actual context. The latter approach is less hostile and dismissive, although either interpretation would be rejected by the writers themselves due to their insistence that they are making a scholarly contribution.)

The act of correlation is creative because it is largely arbitrary. Major figures such as Apollo have so many attributes that they could be correlated at some small remove to almost anything. The selection of some particular attribute (such as music, inducement of visionary experience, solar illumination, the progression of the seasons, stateliness, archery, or what have you) as the primary attribute by which Apollo is connected to the universalist table of correspondences is an arbitrary choice by the syncretistic practitioner. Apollo is not Ra and the claim that he is Ra creates a new myth. Through a set of arbitrary choices of this kind, each of which reduces a complex symbol to a simple cipher, a new universalist myth consisting of a set of relationships is created.

While a table of correspondence à la Agrippa, Barrett or Crowley is useless for the scholar, for the ritualist it serves as a new kind of myth from which ritual practices may be generated by juxtaposing the contents of the columns. It masquerades as the key of all religions, but it is not that - it is an original and creative divination table, based on a set of freshly-minted mythic "facts" about the relations between traditional symbols. It is above all a practical tool, and judging it by the same standards as a dissertation in religious studies would miss the point, even though its creators might want it to be judged that way.

An objection to syncretism that has often been raised is that it leads to awkward and inelegant combinations of elements that are actually irreconcilable. Again the strongest example is the combination of divine names from the devoutly anti-Egyptian Hebrew tradition with the names and images of Egyptian deities from the 19th-century Egyptology craze. While this criticism may be valid on a literary level - a great deal of freshly-rolled myth is poorly crafted - it is inevitable that in a system based on a myth of universalism, disparate symbols will be deliberately juxtaposed. This illustrates the basic premise of the myth, that all the appearances of diversity in religious symbolism are only illusory, and that on an inner level accessible to the initiated, the symbols are all instantiations of an abstract unifying monomyth.

These juxtapositions of opposed symbols are not ignorant or careless. They represent a deliberate flouting of taboos. The symbolic universalist knows full well that it is offensive to an ordinary Christian to say that an aspect of Jehovah is virtually synonymous with a Greek god, an astrological sign, and an Arabic demon, and so he or she chooses to be offensive, to express a protest against these differentiations. A system that did not contain these "erroneous" juxtapositions would be a system that did not express the universalist myth. Similarly, the popular Roman belief that foreign deities were only degraded forms of their own specifically expressed a myth of the propriety of Roman world domination.

Obviously, a mythic system based on protest creates conflicts with those who are dedicated to the targets of the protest. A devout Jew, steeped in an idea of sacralization which is rooted in the overthrow of Egyptian polytheism by Hebrew monotheism, must find it grotesque and absurd to combine the two traditions. From this conservative Jewish perspective, universalism is erroneous in its leveling, while to the universalist, traditional Judaism is erroneous in its parochialism. It is not the work of the scholar to

resolve such disputes, because they are not disputes on a scholarly plane - they derive from the social and emotional factors by which people accept certain myths and reject others. The scholar is treading on very dangerous ground in making normative statements about mythic acceptance and rejection and must ordinarily be content with simple observation(4). At the same time, it is possible to contribute descriptively in explaining in what ways the criticisms that each side aims at the other fail to accurately engage the other's intent and assumptions. In the end syncretism is a religious practice, which the scholar must study with the same deference or lack thereof that would be afforded any other practice.

Notes:

(1) Peter Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

(2) In Ronald L. Grimes (ed.), *Readings in Ritual Studies* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), pp. 86-103.

(3) One can easily find claims of this sort in occult writers such as Blavatsky, Mathers, and Crowley.

(4) For some important considerations in normative discourse on ritual and myth, see Ronald L. Grimes, *Ritual Criticism* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990).

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Why Crowley Doesn't Suck

by Tim Maroney (1997)

I've been reflecting on my contributions to the Thelema list since coming back from vacation, and I noticed that I seem to come down pretty hard on Mr. Crowley. I've said many things like this: He was psychologically naive; his history and politics were uneducated and facile; he failed to make any contribution to philosophy or even to grasp it at a baccalaureate level; it would have been a nightmare if he had achieved secular power; and so on. This may have created a false impression about my feelings towards the man and his work, and I thought I might try to explain.

To understand Aleister Crowley's contributions one needs to create a new category, which I will call "ritual arts." This is a new category only in that it has not been called out as such; people have traditionally viewed ritual (by which I include meditation) as either sacred and beyond mere criteria of artistry, or as socially functional and to be understood as part of a society. I propose that we look at it as an art form related to theater. It is in the area of the stylistic construction of ritual and meditative practices, and as an explicator of these processes of construction and performance, that Crowley comes into his own. In fact, his contributions in this area are unique and deserve to be

part of any religious studies program.

Crowley was a poet, perhaps only of the second rank, but a poet by nature nonetheless, and the grace and beauty of the poetic sentiment infuses all his rituals and meditations. While one could find much to criticize in his overall corpus - poems choked with purple like kudzu, two-dimensional fiction, megalomaniacal essays proposing ultimate answers to questions he did not understand - there is none of this in his ritual instructions. Their style is beautifully sparse, like watermarks on rice paper, with just a gentle touch of purple and a hint of that which cannot quite be put into words. All the flaccid prose of the Golden Dawn, with its pompous Masonic declamation, has been put aside for its few true approaches to the spirit. The result is a genuineness and sincerity of aspiration and experience which is not only beautiful to read but compelling to perform.

In poetry derived from ritual and meditative experience, particularly the sublime Book of Lies and the "Hymn to Pan", Crowley sometimes enters the first rank of metaphysical poets. When he is working from the soul, rather than indulging in the superficial play-acting so characteristic of occultists, he has no need to tart up his work. When he lapses into posing the result is awful - the impenetrable Aha! comes to mind - but our need to exercise selectivity with respect to Crowley's voluminous output in no way vitiates the quality of his best work.

Though his solitary rituals are perfect gems, the same cannot be said of his group rituals. The O.T.O. initiations are lifeless and dull, though occasionally clever, and the less said about his "Rites of Eleusis" the better. The one really successful group ritual he created was the "Gnostic Mass," and even that still creates for many observers the false impression that it is a mere mockery of the Catholic Mass. Despite its strengths, the Gnostic Mass institutionalized Crowley's misogynist ideas about the sexual magic that was central to his system. His belief that "man is the guardian of the Life of God; woman but a temporary expedient; a shrine indeed for the God, but not the God" reduces the priestess, despite a promising introduction, to a mere functionary for the priest, waiting passively as he does all the work in which the real sacredness resides. This point is not lost on most observers and serves to discourage many women from pursuing Crowley studies.

Crowley's longer writings about ritual and meditation practice, of which the best examples are *Magick in Theory and Practice* (MTP) and *Eight Lectures on Yoga*, exist in a gray area. The grayness results from Crowley's unfortunate attempts to delve into philosophy and his self-aggrandizing accounts of his own spiritual authority. To consider only MTP, it leads off with a ridiculous philosophical claim to have reconciled nihilism, monism and dualism by simply attributing each to one to the Thelemic trinity of gods. MTP is riddled with megalomaniacal passages and specious philosophical observations. Yet when Crowley simply explains how he thinks rituals work, what feelings he associates with particular points of ritual, styles appropriate to particular points, and how the parts integrate into the whole, he presents a comfort with and knowledge of Western occult modes that would be difficult to find anywhere else.

I have in the past faulted MTP for parochialism, in that Crowley seems to take a particular ritual formula as paramount when in fact there are many other forms of magical ritual, and for exegesis instead of analysis, since he generally fails to jump to a meta-level of analysis to engage basic questions, such as why we would want to do ritual in the first place or why rituals should involve mythic figures such as gods. For these issues one will have to go to ritual studies and anthropology. Still, the fact that he fails to contribute here does not mean that he makes no contribution at all. His account of his own practice and of his thinking about it is unusually detailed and beautifully rendered, and deserves general study as a unique window into practice.

One more of Crowley's strong points deserves mention, again related to his writing. The Equinox is half mystical encyclopedia and half literary journal. While its literary contributions are not stellar, they are good, and the playful, knowing feel of the whole is as pleasant now as it was almost a century ago. Mystics and magicians today are often faced with a great cultural divide from their spiritual ancestors, and simply to see a magician being very much a man of the twentieth century is a useful lesson.

Of course, none of this excuses Crowley's more egregious personality failings or his dilettante excursions into areas he was unable to understand, which I will continue to underline as the opportunity presents itself. In the future, though, I will try to give equal time to the good and the bad, rather than allowing myself to be drawn into the reactive mode of constantly correcting his followers when they demand that Crowley be showered with unearned rewards.

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Various Essays

This page is always under construction.

Here I have archived a number of my past writings, particularly ones that other people have saved over the years and republished on their own web sites. If you have an old favorite you've squirreled away, please send it to me and I'll consider whether I want to put it here, or whether I would prefer to find all copies and have them burned.

The Included Middle

After I became a member of Scarlet Woman Lodge of the O.T.O. in Austin, Texas in 1997, I began a series of columns for their magazine, The Scarlet Letter. The first two installments came out in 1998. The third was published in the newsletter of Hodos Chameleonis Oasis in Sacramento, California. The fourth appeared again in the Scarlet Letter.

The Included Middle - A brief essay on the interplay between skepticism and mysticism.
Facts and Phallacies - A much longer essay in response to Hymenæus Beta's Address to the Women's Conference, published in the Magickal Link, the O.T.O.'s international newsletter. This deals in excruciating, pedantic detail with the issue of Aleister Crowley's

phallocentrism, and with some modern defenses of the sexist parts of his legacy.

A Letter to Close - A skeptical analysis of Crowley's "An Open Letter to Those Who Would Join the Order".

The Freedom of Doubt - An essay on the classical skepticism of Sextus Empiricus and how it relates to various forms of skepticism in religious and mystical traditions, including a critical look at Crowley's claims of skepticism.

Why I Study Magic

In December 1997 Lilinah Biti-Anat asked me casually why I was into magic. I found this a very hard question to answer and it has taken me three months to get this response into shape. Why the difficulty? I have a distaste for formulaic answers, such as "to know and do my will," and when I approach my real love of the subject I become uneasy. Here is my current understanding of why I continue to be involved with a subject that is so often a source of dismay.

Introduction to Crowley Studies (in Five Voices)

In Fall 1997 this 10,000 word piece erupted from my brain in a great rush over the period of a few hours, preceding the final collapse of my four-year relationship and my resignation from my three-year stint at Apple. I was concerned that no one was looking at the magician Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) from a serious perspective. The O.T.O.'s publications provided only one-sided advocacy pieces, and most casual writing about Crowley was either biographical muckraking that ignored his contributions to spirituality, or devotional writing that assumed the literal truth of his odd system of belief. My own views lie at the center of this triangle. The literary conceit of the five voices was meant to serve two purposes: first, practice for fiction writing; second, a navigational aid for the reader in the sea of conflicting opinions about this most unusual character.

The Problems of Syncretism

This started as a network message on Thelema93-L in 1997, in response to concerns expressed by Jeffrey Smith about juxtaposition of Hebrew and Egyptian divine names in the Golden Dawn. Syncretism is a major issue in modern occultism and paganism, but most of the people practicing it don't know what it is. The idea that the monomyth should be studied as a valid myth rather than disparaged as bad scholarship had been growing in me for some time and this discussion gave me the perfect opportunity to express my thoughts on the subject. This version has been expanded and clarified, including responses to some issues raised by John Everall.

Why Crowley Doesn't Suck

This is another piece from the Thelema93-L mailing list in 1997. It is an attempt to answer the musical question, "Why would anyone study a creep like Aleister Crowley?" It laid some of the groundwork for the Introduction to Crowley Studies and Why I Study Magic and is presented here in its original form.

Healing the Spiritual Community

This 7,000 word essay on the psychology and sociology of the darker side of spiritual group dynamics was written in 1994. It is one of my life goals to expand this essay to its proper length and publish it as a book.

Theory of Divination

This essay was extracted from a Tarot HyperCard stack I worked on in 1990. It tries to survey a variety of approaches to the question of how and whether divination works. I have fixed it up slightly to remove references to the context in which it originally ran. The multi-theoretical approach of the essay prefigures the multi-voice approach of the Introduction to Crowley Studies. I tried to disguise my own views; see if you can tell which theory I most endorse!

On the Definition of the Sacred

A network message from the late-1980's FidoNet/PODS period, this piece frequently turns up on the networks. The idea of a multi-dimensional analysis of spiritual experience seems to hold up fairly well. The message was written as a blast at a sysop who advocated my exclusion from these computer networks, and who had (conveniently) just made some rather foolish statements about spirituality and language. No one - including the victim - has realized that it could be read as character assassination, and in fact I have gotten requests that I write more non-inflammatory messages like this one!

Twilight Crossing

In the late 1980's, I had a series of visionary dreams and hypnagogic experiences, in which I was initiated in an underground realm by the goddess Hekati and her servant, the sorceress Medea. As a result I became a Hekatean in my own fashion, though at the time I was completely ignorant of Neo-Platonism and her role in it, and relied solely on classical mythology for information. At the same time I was embroiled in a number of disputes with the O.T.O., with Neo-Pagan and Witchcraft groups and with the Temple of Set. The dogmatism and irrationality that had irritated me in my discussions with Christians had turned out to be just as prominent in the esoteric groups in which I had imagined I would one day find a spiritual home. I did not want to join these groups but I wanted to work group ritual. Some of my discussion partners suggested that I should start my own group, and so I sketched out this one, more as a thought-experiment than anything else. Once people started getting interested, I realized I really did not want to run a spiritual group myself and so I rather unceremoniously shut it down. The message illuminates my Hekatean interests with what I have been told is some eloquence, and expresses interesting ideas about how a "liberal" occult group could be run.

Pagan History

This message was written for USENET's talk.religion.misc in early December 1986, in response to a request for information on paganism. I recently rediscovered it on an egosurfing expedition (that is, I was typing my name into search engines to see what people were saying about me). It is a little starry-eyed about the tolerance of pagans, and there are some issues of historical interpretation that I have since come to approach rather differently, but otherwise the piece seems to need little revision now. I have left it in its original state, except to correct a few typographical errors.

On the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram

After the right-wing fundamentalist Christians who ran the Computer Science department at UNC threw me off the network due to my occult and leftist views, I went to Carnegie Mellon and started the New Age Mailing List. At the time the term "New Age" hadn't been stigmatized as it has now, and this mailing list was "the first international computer network run by a pagan or occultist, for pagans and occultists". This little essay appeared in the first number, on Fri Dec 21, 1984. This is a later draft from June 1990, which I have tweaked again in this March 1998 version. It is a practical instruction in one of the primary rituals of Golden Dawn-derived magic, from which the Wiccan circle ritual also derives. I will probably augment it with pictures in the future.

Even If I Did Believe...

This late draft of an early religious essay from 1983 and 1984 is an example of my "angry young man" phase. I have outgrown the anti-Christianity of the piece, and now feel that Christianity is no better or worse than most other religions overall. Those of us who were raised in it and came to realize that we were being sold a bill of goods naturally have feelings of betrayal, but other religions contain moral and ethical flaws of similar magnitude. This point is often missed because we know about foreign traditions largely from advocacy writing. Nonetheless, even after all this time, I am pleased with the style and the reasoning, and the piece remains a serious challenge to simple-minded Biblical literalism.

I must mention the two strangest things that have happened in connection with this essay. First, a man on net.religion adopted it as a religious creed, deciding that God was real and awful, and arguing from this point of view for several years. He appeared to be sincere. Second, and more recently, I was asked whether the essay could be used in an evangelical training program to make sure the students had answers to all my concerns. I did not respond to the request once its intent was explained and I do not know whether it was used in this way - but of course, educators are largely exempt from normal restrictions of copyright....

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Various Essays

This page is always under construction.

Here I have archived a number of my past writings, particularly ones that other people have saved over the years and republished on their own web sites. If you have an old favorite you've squirreled away, please send it to me and I'll consider whether I want to put it here, or whether I would prefer to find all copies and have them burned.

The Included Middle

After I became a member of Scarlet Woman Lodge of the O.T.O. in Austin, Texas in 1997, I began a series of columns for their magazine, The Scarlet Letter. The first two installments came out in 1998. The third was published in the newsletter of Hodos Chameleonis Oasis in Sacramento, California. The fourth appeared again in the Scarlet

Letter.

The Included Middle - A brief essay on the interplay between skepticism and mysticism.
Facts and Phallacies - A much longer essay in response to Hymenæus Beta's Address to the Women's Conference, published in the Magickal Link, the O.T.O.'s international newsletter. This deals in excruciating, pedantic detail with the issue of Aleister Crowley's phallocentrism, and with some modern defenses of the sexist parts of his legacy.

A Letter to Close - A skeptical analysis of Crowley's "An Open Letter to Those Who Would Join the Order".

The Freedom of Doubt - An essay on the classical skepticism of Sextus Empiricus and how it relates to various forms of skepticism in religious and mystical traditions, including a critical look at Crowley's claims of skepticism.

Why I Study Magic

In December 1997 Lilinah Biti-Anat asked me casually why I was into magic. I found this a very hard question to answer and it has taken me three months to get this response into shape. Why the difficulty? I have a distaste for formulaic answers, such as "to know and do my will," and when I approach my real love of the subject I become uneasy. Here is my current understanding of why I continue to be involved with a subject that is so often a source of dismay.

Introduction to Crowley Studies (in Five Voices)

In Fall 1997 this 10,000 word piece erupted from my brain in a great rush over the period of a few hours, preceding the final collapse of my four-year relationship and my resignation from my three-year stint at Apple. I was concerned that no one was looking at the magician Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) from a serious perspective. The O.T.O.'s publications provided only one-sided advocacy pieces, and most casual writing about Crowley was either biographical muckraking that ignored his contributions to spirituality, or devotional writing that assumed the literal truth of his odd system of belief. My own views lie at the center of this triangle. The literary conceit of the five voices was meant to serve two purposes: first, practice for fiction writing; second, a navigational aid for the reader in the sea of conflicting opinions about this most unusual character.

The Problems of Syncretism

This started as a network message on Thelema93-L in 1997, in response to concerns expressed by Jeffrey Smith about juxtaposition of Hebrew and Egyptian divine names in the Golden Dawn. Syncretism is a major issue in modern occultism and paganism, but most of the people practicing it don't know what it is. The idea that the monomyth should be studied as a valid myth rather than disparaged as bad scholarship had been growing in me for some time and this discussion gave me the perfect opportunity to express my thoughts on the subject. This version has been expanded and clarified, including responses to some issues raised by John Everall.

Why Crowley Doesn't Suck

This is another piece from the Thelema93-L mailing list in 1997. It is an attempt to answer the musical question, "Why would anyone study a creep like Aleister Crowley?" It laid some of the groundwork for the Introduction to Crowley Studies and Why I Study

Magic and is presented here in its original form.

Healing the Spiritual Community

This 7,000 word essay on the psychology and sociology of the darker side of spiritual group dynamics was written in 1994. It is one of my life goals to expand this essay to its proper length and publish it as a book.

Theory of Divination

This essay was extracted from a Tarot HyperCard stack I worked on in 1990. It tries to survey a variety of approaches to the question of how and whether divination works. I have fixed it up slightly to remove references to the context in which it originally ran. The multi-theoretical approach of the essay prefigures the multi-voice approach of the Introduction to Crowley Studies. I tried to disguise my own views; see if you can tell which theory I most endorse!

On the Definition of the Sacred

A network message from the late-1980's FidoNet/PODS period, this piece frequently turns up on the networks. The idea of a multi-dimensional analysis of spiritual experience seems to hold up fairly well. The message was written as a blast at a sysop who advocated my exclusion from these computer networks, and who had (conveniently) just made some rather foolish statements about spirituality and language. No one - including the victim - has realized that it could be read as character assassination, and in fact I have gotten requests that I write more non-inflammatory messages like this one!

Twilight Crossing

In the late 1980's, I had a series of visionary dreams and hypnagogic experiences, in which I was initiated in an underground realm by the goddess Hekati and her servant, the sorceress Medea. As a result I became a Hekatean in my own fashion, though at the time I was completely ignorant of Neo-Platonism and her role in it, and relied solely on classical mythology for information. At the same time I was embroiled in a number of disputes with the O.T.O., with Neo-Pagan and Witchcraft groups and with the Temple of Set. The dogmatism and irrationality that had irritated me in my discussions with Christians had turned out to be just as prominent in the esoteric groups in which I had imagined I would one day find a spiritual home. I did not want to join these groups but I wanted to work group ritual. Some of my discussion partners suggested that I should start my own group, and so I sketched out this one, more as a thought-experiment than anything else. Once people started getting interested, I realized I really did not want to run a spiritual group myself and so I rather unceremoniously shut it down. The message illuminates my Hekatean interests with what I have been told is some eloquence, and expresses interesting ideas about how a "liberal" occult group could be run.

Pagan History

This message was written for USENET's talk.religion.misc in early December 1986, in response to a request for information on paganism. I recently rediscovered it on an egosurfing expedition (that is, I was typing my name into search engines to see what

people were saying about me). It is a little starry-eyed about the tolerance of pagans, and there are some issues of historical interpretation that I have since come to approach rather differently, but otherwise the piece seems to need little revision now. I have left it in its original state, except to correct a few typographical errors.

On the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram

After the right-wing fundamentalist Christians who ran the Computer Science department at UNC threw me off the network due to my occult and leftist views, I went to Carnegie Mellon and started the New Age Mailing List. At the time the term "New Age" hadn't been stigmatized as it has now, and this mailing list was "the first international computer network run by a pagan or occultist, for pagans and occultists". This little essay appeared in the first number, on Fri Dec 21, 1984. This is a later draft from June 1990, which I have tweaked again in this March 1998 version. It is a practical instruction in one of the primary rituals of Golden Dawn-derived magic, from which the Wiccan circle ritual also derives. I will probably augment it with pictures in the future.

Even If I Did Believe...

This late draft of an early religious essay from 1983 and 1984 is an example of my "angry young man" phase. I have outgrown the anti-Christianity of the piece, and now feel that Christianity is no better or worse than most other religions overall. Those of us who were raised in it and came to realize that we were being sold a bill of goods naturally have feelings of betrayal, but other religions contain moral and ethical flaws of similar magnitude. This point is often missed because we know about foreign traditions largely from advocacy writing. Nonetheless, even after all this time, I am pleased with the style and the reasoning, and the piece remains a serious challenge to simple-minded Biblical literalism.

I must mention the two strangest things that have happened in connection with this essay. First, a man on net.religion adopted it as a religious creed, deciding that God was real and awful, and arguing from this point of view for several years. He appeared to be sincere. Second, and more recently, I was asked whether the essay could be used in an evangelical training program to make sure the students had answers to all my concerns. I did not respond to the request once its intent was explained and I do not know whether it was used in this way - but of course, educators are largely exempt from normal restrictions of copyright....

http://maroney.org/Essays/Healing_The_Community.html

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Healing the Spiritual Community

by Tim Maroney (1994)

Community is an increasingly popular ideal. For many people, spiritual communities provide healing, support and other vital needs. However, community has a dark side: it does not always heal, but hurts. The profusion of books and articles lauding community virtually ignore its negative effects. One recent volume brushes aside all concerns as "fears of intimacy and commitment" and "the illusion that humans are separate",

magnanimously enjoining the reader to "forgive yourself if you have fallen into either of these illusions."[1]

The goal of this article is not to downplay the real benefits of community, but to fill in parts of the puzzle that are omitted by its advocates. Some common sources of problems will be discussed, then practical solutions will be proposed.

Negative Images of the Self

People seek spiritual escapes from a feeling of inner wrongness, unworthiness or confusion. As a result, low self esteem is common in spiritual communities. As Roy F. Baumeister observes:

Escaping the self is centrally important in spiritual exercise. Religious disciplines from all over the world differ radically from each other in fundamental doctrines, techniques, promised results, and theoretical context, but all tend to agree on the importance of shedding the self. We shall see this message repeated over and over: the self is a barrier to spiritual advancement.[2]

Spirituality is attractive to those who search for release from a negative self-image because it explicitly states the unworthiness of the self and offers the promise of a remedy.

A negative self-image can cause social problems by creating unbalanced cravings for approval, guidance, power, sexual validation, and so on. Sometimes it is a realistic engagement of personal problems, but it often lends itself to self-destructive attitudes and behavior.

People who do not like themselves often imagine that they are under attack, externalizing their internal struggles. For instance, such a person might hear an inquiry about their opinion on some subject as an accusation of ignorance. They imagine that other people view them as negatively as they view themselves. Because of their tendency to see attack everywhere, people with low self-esteem are also prone to jealousy and resentment. Another person's success or happiness may be seen as a backhanded slap. Well-meaning people can find themselves at the center of all sorts of conflicts in spiritual communities if they do not step lightly in this minefield of imaginary insults.

Inner attacks are also externalized in another way: "many people with low self-esteem are critical of everyone"[3]. People who dislike themselves also tend to have low opinions of others. Negative judgments of character are a common source of problems in spiritual groups.

One way to escape the self is to become someone else. By creating alternate personae, it is possible to withdraw from a painful self-consciousness. Baumeister documents this tactic in suicidal personalities and sexual submissives[4]. In religion, people answer to different names and adopt different styles of clothing to take them away from their

outside selves. Members of magical communities often play fantasy role-playing games and participate in historical re-enactments. For some people, these activities are harmless diversions, while for others they act out a desire to escape.

People sometimes join a group because they feel themselves lacking in some quality and want the group to make up that lack. This can lead to a contradiction: the ideals of a spiritual community may be the opposite of the personalities of its members. A "compassion" group may be insensitive and judgmental; a "kinship" group may seem like a dysfunctional family; a "free love" group may be wracked by jealous discord; a "free-thinking" group may be doctrinally rigid; and so on. The group ideal is most attractive to the people who are least able to live up to it!

Two Kinds of Trust

Spiritual groups often praise trust as a fundamental virtue, but trust does not come easily to people. Deep trust consists of freedom from artifice, sham and pretense: an opening and unfolding of the inner self. Its ultimate form is enlightenment, where one exposes one's heart to the universe without shame or fear. All veils and illusions are dissolved, and all barriers are lowered. Even short of this great spiritual awakening, we may drop all the barriers that we are able to let go of in the presence of people we esteem - that too is deep trust.

Actors on the stage have a different kind of trust. They know that the other actors will behave a certain way, according to their agreed-upon roles. This is not deep trust, but comfortable distance and predictability. It is the knowledge that no barriers will be challenged. Playing a role can reduce inhibitions^[5] and so it can be positive. To reveal themselves at all, people with low self esteem need to know that they will be judged favorably. To have confidence in others, one must have confidence in oneself; if our own feelings about ourselves are negative, we assume that others will feel the same. In a support group, everyone can be trusted to play a supportive role.

The trust of actors can lead over time to deep trust. People gradually lower their barriers through prolonged role-playing. By skirting around the periphery of another person for a while, one may see that the other is safe in some regard, and relax - not completely, but by a small, measured amount. Seeing that the first person lowered their barriers a little, the other may reciprocate; and so it goes. This slow, piecewise removal of character armor may play out over years.

Some people are impatient with this process, and shed their defenses before others are ready to see them naked. People jump headlong into deep trust for several reasons. They may see through pretense, so they are exasperated by artifice - they can't understand why people maintain their façades. People with low self esteem may find the effort of maintaining their rigid defenses exhausting, motivating them to spring at any chance to relax. Some people know the spiritual value of lowered barriers from personal mystical experience and expect the same in group workings.

Many conflicts in spiritual communities result from confusing these two kinds of trust.

The esteem in which groups hold the principle of trust can create the impression that members are supposed to proceed directly to deep trust and skip the preliminary stages. However, they are actually supposed to act out a role which simulates deep trust. Failing to realize the unspoken boundaries of the game can lead to disaster! Even when someone is willing to trust others, it takes time for them to respond in kind. As Nietzsche wrote:

Thou wouldst wear no raiment before thy friend? It is in honour of thy friend that thou showest thyself to him as thou art? But he wishes thee to the devil on that account!

He who maketh no secret of himself shocketh: so much reason have ye to fear nakedness! Aye, if ye were gods, ye could then be ashamed to wear clothing![6]

Humans are role-playing animals. Most art involves some sort of artificiality, and any group project requires the adoption of roles. In an enlightened society, people would still act, but they would act consciously and playfully, without an intent to deceive others or themselves. In today's society, those who are skilled at role-playing are accepted, while those who wear their hearts on their sleeves are scorned. There may come a day when deep trust is the rule rather than the exception, but for now, it is precious and rare. Spreading it freely causes resentment, especially among people with low self esteem. The world would be better if more people opened their hearts, but anyone who expects openness to make them popular may be disappointed.

Judgments of Character

Initiatory groups and similar assemblies apply a model of spiritual progress in which the member is "brought to light" by successive degrees. In some cases the degrees are informal, while in others they are highly structured. In either case, those who have attained higher degree are responsible for judging the progress of those of lower degree, and admitting them to the next level when they are deemed ready. The focus is ostensibly on the spiritual progress of the initiate, but as Jean La Fontaine observes:

The transformation of individuals, by the ritual which transfers them from one social state to another, ... supports the position of those in authority, the officiants, whether these are secret-society officials or traditional leaders. The individuals are, to this extent, objects used in the ritual, rather than its central focus through which the ritual is to be explained. Initiation rituals cannot be understood simply as a means of changing the status of individuals.

Failure to recognize that initiation rituals are `for' those already initiated, as much as for the novices, ... has been a handicap in analysis.[7]

In spiritual communities, the process of judgment has as much to do with the judges as with the people they judge. The judges gain a feeling of power and superiority from their role. Whatever the legitimate function of judgment in the spiritual path, these rewards also create a motivation to judge, which can be satisfied as easily by a false judgment as a true one - perhaps more so, since a false judgment is a greater manifestation of

power. Conversely, novices who seek guidance in order to submit, to compensate for low self esteem, or to vicariously wield power will be happy with misguided assessments of their character.

Psychotherapists are supposed to be disinterested: they are not in a position of power over, nor socially involved with, their clients, and this removes much of the potential for conflicts of interest. A similar ideal holds in jurisprudence: judges are expected to recuse themselves from cases in which they have a personal interest. Therapy and the courts sometimes fall short of this ideal, but spiritual communities constantly defy it. The people placed in judgment over the aspirant are often competing with them for social resources such as power, approval and sex.

The issue of judgment is further complicated by the use of questionable methods, such as telepathy, numerology and astrology[8]; chiding and moralistic concepts such as "worthiness" and "ignorance"; lack of psychological training and disdain for psychotherapy as a competitive belief system; the usual thirst for certainty among the religious; a compensatory desire to judge in those who have been judged themselves; and the quickness of people with low self esteem to form negative judgments. Given all these factors, it is not surprising that so many conflicts in spiritual groups involve wild accusations about others' personalities and motives.

Even outside religion, we often impute motives to others for self-interested reasons rather than in a sincere attempt to understand their psychology. Nietzsche expressed one mode of judgment succinctly:

What really are our reactions to the behaviour of someone in our presence? First of all, we see what there is in it for us - we regard it only from this point of view. We take the effect as the intention behind the behaviour - and finally we ascribe the harbouring of such intentions as a permanent quality of the person whose behavior we are observing and thenceforth call him, for instance, 'a harmful person'. Threefold error! Threefold primeval blunder![9]

Politics provides an example. In any country, it is considered polite to gloss over the less admirable areas of national history. People who decline to participate in this selective blindness are accused of doing so for reasons of schadenfreude, taking pleasure in the pain of others. Yet the dissidents themselves feel that they are concerned with historical accuracy and compassion for the victims of policy. The researches of dissidents threaten the regard in which citizens prefer to hold their country, causing a painful feeling of shared guilt instead of the usual national pride - so the offended citizen concludes that the purpose of dissidence is to spoil their pleasure: that dissidents are driven by malice.

The same mode of judgment is common in spiritual groups. The consequences of people's actions are confused for their motivations. People who ask difficult questions about the group's belief system are assumed to be doing so, not out of real philosophical interest, but to undermine "the truth". People whose ideas or behavior

seem to threaten goals for the group are not thought of as having different goals, but as saboteurs bent on destruction.

In order to communicate, we constantly construct models of the minds of those around us. Judgment is not bad in itself, but we should know that our judgments are often incorrect, and we should be skeptical of them. A good therapist is less certain about a client's mind after a year of therapy than a typical spiritual guide is after a month. The therapist's training has demonstrated the difficulty of psychological judgment, while the guide is powerfully motivated to judge.

Judgment of character in spiritual groups usually has more to do with a game of dominance and submission than with analysis of personality. The more self-knowledge an aspirant may have, the less accurate the facile judgments of the guides will seem. Disagreement is a sure recipe for exclusion.

The Functions of Belief

A persistent theme in the twentieth century has been the crisis of values. The subject appears in psychology, literary criticism, sociology, and philosophy time and again. We no longer accept the inherited values of our culture; they are impossible to square with modern understandings. We see customs as natural phenomena without intrinsic meaning rather than as guides for our lives. No general defining value system has emerged to remove the resulting feeling of anxiety.

Spiritual beliefs fill this gap by providing a context for meaning and feeling in our lives. Their certainty acts as a defense against insecurity. In group dynamics, the truth or falsehood of spiritual beliefs matters little: what is important is that they remove anxiety and promote conviction. Challenges to such beliefs may be viewed as malicious attempts to restore the previous state of anxiety and emptiness, provoking a defensive reaction.

The one-sidedly positive view of community discussed at the start of this article demonstrates another aspect of the process. People tend to be more concerned with the imagined results of words than with their accuracy. If one has decided to support a cause, then one becomes an advocate, brushing aside criticism and focusing on positive attributes. It's not that criticism is necessarily false, one thinks, but an open discussion of problems might hurt morale and discourage converts. This unrelenting boosterism makes it difficult to address real problems.

Not only do spiritual beliefs fill a void, they are often defenses against reality. Baumeister shows how escape from the self involves flights into irrationality and fantasy as a way of diverting the focus of consciousness from meaningful material.[10] The more bizarre the beliefs, the better they distract attention from an unpleasant complex of realistic, though perhaps inaccurate, meanings. Eric Hoffer notes this connection between faith and low self esteem:

Faith in a holy cause is to a considerable extent a substitute for the lost faith in

ourselves.

The less justified a man is in claiming excellence for himself, the more ready he is to claim all excellence for his nation, his religion, his race or his holy cause.[11]

When substitution motivates spiritual belief, defensive reactions against perceived challenges to the belief system may take extreme, irrational, even violent forms. Aside from such severe reactions, groups dull critical thinking by an automatic process known as "groupthink". The psychologist Irving L. Janis wrote that "Groupthink refers to a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressures." [12] Janis developed the idea of groupthink in reference to political fiascos such as the Bay of Pigs, but it applies equally well to spiritual communities. The process was summarized by Jeffrey S. Victor:

Groupthink can be seen to operate in religious groups, therapy groups, and even corporate bureaucracies, in which the need to maintain cooperative interaction between members creates a pressure to conform. These in turn suppress questioning, skepticism, and dispute about prevailing beliefs. The desire of participants to preserve friendly relationships among themselves inhibits their expressing points of view that deviate from informally accepted group norms. Participants who attempt to bring issues that might cause internal bickering and conflict are subtly chastised for their disloyalty, or they are ostracised. The process works upon individual perceptions of reality. Members who might privately consider some beliefs unacceptable begin to doubt their own thinking and change their beliefs to fit into the reality constructed by the group.[13]

Because of all these pressures, it may make little difference whether a spiritual community defines itself as open, tolerant, and non-dogmatic. The anxiety associated with an absence of defining beliefs, the position of advocacy, and the conformist pressures of groupthink act together to suppress questions about the central tenets of the group. The lack of a formalized system of dogma is no guarantee of pluralism. Informality can create the false impression that all of the members independently arrived at the same ideas, even though the ideas may be bizarre. This apparent voluntarism, the seeming like-mindedness of the membership, offers dissenters a choice: either accept the system, or realize that you don't belong here.

People decline to go along with formal and informal dogmas for a variety of reasons. Some reasons reflect well on dissenters (philosophical curiosity and fearlessness, the desire to repair problems) while some reflect badly (obnoxious nay-saying, acting out martyrdom scenarios) but the result is generally the same. People who don't go along with the unbalanced advocacy that is the hallmark of spiritual communities find themselves treated as threats.

Twelve Goals People Have in Groups

Comfort: To feel at ease, relaxed, secure: a "coming home" feeling.

Approval: To get approval from others; to be part of a support group.

Education: To acquire and improve skills and knowledge; to get training in methods and access to information.

Cooperation: To accomplish more than what a single person can do alone; to practice and get feedback.

Friendship: To make friends.

Sex: To find sexual partners.

Contact: To get physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual contact.

Drama: To get stimulation and excitement, even conflict and tension.

Giving: To share skills or expertise; to give time and energy to a cause.

Power: To achieve status, as opposed to mere acceptance. Many people want power, but are content with wielding it vicariously by identifying with their leaders.

Guidance: To get outside direction and guidance, as opposed to education. This often appears together with the desire for power: many devotees dream of assuming the guru's role someday!

Healing: To fix something that is wrong; to get salvation, initiation, or some other spiritual cure for a real or imaginary ailment.

In addition to these common goals, people often join groups to act out a scenario in which they take on a particular role which they enjoy, which flatters their self-image, or which satisfies some other need. Some typical roles are guru, chela, teacher, student, scholar, sage, maverick, priest(ess), judge, initiate, therapist, healer, oracle, soldier, warrior, activist, social manager, tortured artist, life of the party, and sacred prostitute.

Conflicts of Goals

Conflicts of goals are more common sources of strife than "personality conflicts". Even when two people rub each other the wrong way, they are likely to come to some kind of truce as long as they believe they share the same goals.

The possibilities for conflict of goals are immense. Consider the twelve goals identified above (see box, page [*]). There are cases in which any one of them could conflict with any other. For instance, one person's desire for approval could conflict with another's desire for education - the first would try to make the community a support group, the other a classroom.

Conflicts are especially likely when people actively disparage certain goals. Lone wolves may look down on the desire for approval; married people and celibates may

scorn those who search for sex partners; and so on. In fact, all twelve goals are natural human drives, and none deserves to be treated with contempt. Even the desire for power may be a manifestation of the desire for cooperation - perhaps someone who truly has vision should seek a leadership role. Failure to respect others' goals is part of the general problem of facile judgment, already discussed.

Some goals foster conflict by themselves. There is no drama without conflict, and the desire for drama can create melodrama. If struggle can be focused against obstacles such as the lack of funds or the difficulty of projects, then the desire for drama may form a positive part of a group, but if it is directed into the social sphere it is likely to cause problems.

Sex can be a very positive part of human life, but when several people fish in the same sea of potential partners, jealous conflicts are inevitable.

Power is especially problematic. This goal may be gratified by the accomplishment of significant works, but again, it is often abused when turned toward the group itself. In fact, the ability to abuse power is instinctively considered its true measure. If one cannot abuse power, one does not really have it - one merely has the same ability to influence consensus that everyone else has. For this reason, people often test their power by wielding it in cruel and inconsiderate ways.

Healing from Conflicts

Having understood some of the reasons for conflicts in spiritual communities, we can proceed to the issue of healing. Here are some strategies to deal with the painful memories and emotions that follow conflicts in a group.

1: Getting Past Blame

When problems become serious, there is plenty of blame to go around. Each side may form a melodramatic and exaggerated version of events, portraying their opponents as demons or idiots. Conversely, people may indulge in self-recrimination, asking themselves, "Why didn't I see this happening? How could I have been so stupid?" As Nietzsche observed:

Guilt is always sought wherever there is failure; for failure brings with it a depression of spirits against which the sole remedy is instinctively applied: a new excitation of the feeling of power - and this is to be discovered in the condemnation of the 'guilty'.... To condemn oneself can also be a means of restoring the feeling of strength after a defeat.[14]

Blame is a common defense mechanism. To deal with a difficult memory, a person substitutes a kind of morality play. Defensive stories often seize on a single event as the sole cause of every problem and replace characters with caricatures. It is easy to see people not as the deep and contradictory processes they are, but as heroes and villains.

Ideas of blame are not necessarily false, but they get in the way of understanding the

complex and ambiguous processes behind events. If physicists had thought electrons were evil, we never would have learned how atoms work. Psychology only came into its own after the idea of "sin" had fallen into disfavor among the educated.

Some situations seem to demand a finding of fault. For instance, if someone was thrown out of a group by the leader after the leader's lover flirted with them, it's hard for the person who was expelled to suspend judgment of the leader. If someone was removed after claiming to be the reincarnation of a prophet, others are likely to view that person with contempt. The appearance of jealousy, megalomania or other unsavory feelings is bound to create a feeling of blame, but a rush to judgment may oversimplify the situation. Other factors may have been just as important.

The inclination to think of mental problems as shameful can be an obstacle to healing. When we tell someone that they're crazy, we're insulting them, not encouraging them to get help. In the mythical land of Erewhon[15], a case of the sniffles was a guilty secret and a sin, but people would casually mention their mental treatment for shoplifting. If we considered a neurosis as blameless as a head cold, it might be easier to deal with.

Unfortunately, realizing we have a problem sometimes makes it worse, because we blame ourselves for it. We often try to control problematic thoughts by stigmatizing them: "I mustn't think that; there's something wrong with me if I think that!" This defense is known as repression. Its result, according to Freud[16], is to drive the thought into the unconscious mind, where it becomes stronger. Soon it will be bubbling up in twisted forms everywhere, together with its associated guilt.

A process of calm withdrawal from reproach is more effective. Learn to recognize blame models, but don't punish yourself for them; just watch them and let them go. Realize that emotions such as jealousy, self-glorification, and malice are natural processes, no more shameful than erosion or hunger. They are phenomena in people's minds, including yours and mine.

2: Sublimating Negative Emotion

After withdrawal from a troubled group situation, an outpouring of frustration and rage can create depression or obsession. One alternative is to sublimate this energy into new projects. Creation and destruction are two faces of one coin: the destruction of one situation can form the basis for a new and better one, while the creation of a new condition invariably destroys an old state of affairs.

When one's mind is in an obsessive state, turning it towards a different but emotionally similar object causes the obsession to fix on the new object. Anger can fuel poetry, art, music, construction, bodybuilding - any number of creative endeavors. Sorrow is naturally related to compassion; after a disaster, one's own sadness can become sympathy for the pain of everyone involved, even those on the other side of the fence, and so result in a broader and less blameful understanding. Disappointment can be frustrating, but it also underscores and illuminates one's own fuzzy aspirations: the failure of a group situation may leave one more aware of what one actually wants from

groups.

3: Knowing Yourself

Most people do not know consciously what they want from groups. Unfortunately, what you don't know can hurt you. Before plunging into a group with a vague idea that it will solve your problems and assuage your loneliness, it would be wise to review the goals people have in groups and work out how you feel about each of them.

This is not easy, because we often deny that we desire exactly those things that we want most. There really is no substitute for the advice of a trained counselor. Simply talking out deeply held feelings with a therapist invariably leads to realizations which one would never have had in isolation. Understanding one's own drives and assumptions can only help the spiritual aspirant, and modern psychotherapy is more effective at providing this kind of self-knowledge than are most spiritual disciplines. The late Israel Regardie described himself as "adamant ... that to obtain the greatest benefit from Magic which is as it were a post-graduate study there should be some undergraduate work in a personal therapy. The dividends are enormous." [17]

Self-knowledge is good in itself, but it also has effects on behavior. Many defense mechanisms are unconscious, and uncovering their roots often inclines one to act differently in the future. An unconscious motive can only rule a person as long as it remains hidden or denied. Goals are sometimes compensatory: for instance, the desire to find sexual partners may have less to do with libido than with a desire for validation that compensates for low self esteem. Simply learning this may reduce the compulsive strength of the drive and lead to more realistic goals.

In some cases, this reduction of drive strength due to self-knowledge may leave one with little desire to participate in groups. If one's social motivations are largely compensatory, self-knowledge might dry them up to the point where one becomes self-complete and self-content: a hermit. If this really is your natural inclination, enjoy the freedom that comes with solitude! However, choosing isolation can also be a defense mechanism against the natural desire for community.

Prevention

Armed with a knowledge of group dynamics, and the ability to confront sources of trouble, groups can re-examine and rework themselves to be healthier and more healing. If your community has had problems, don't blame it all on the personality failings of people who have departed. Review the comments above on getting past blame, and consider some of these ways to make your community stronger.

1: Conscious Games

Accept certain kinds of social interaction as games. Roles can be set out in advance and performed for a limited duration. To formalize a support group, for instance, support might begin when a bell was rung; no critical comments would be allowed until the bell was rung again.

In support groups, people often attack others who are not present. Criticizing anyone who's there is against the rules, but everyone else is fair game. It's fine to talk about feeling bad because so-and-so did something awful, but no one is allowed to ask skeptically, "Hold on: how do we know you're telling the truth? Are we being fair to so-and-so?" Members who were unfortunate enough to miss a meeting may find themselves abruptly made unwelcome. Because the participants do not know they are playing a game, the judgments they form can persist after the game is over and cause conflicts. By making the rules explicit, people are less likely to mistake artificial role-playing judgments for real-life decisions.

2: Establishing Process

Groups of any kind are most efficient when people have well-defined roles to play. The ideal of "process" - drawing up procedures for decision-making ahead of time and following them scrupulously - is as useful in spiritual communities as in business. The less process there is in any group endeavor, the more likely conflicts become. Groups run in an anarchistic manner, with no formal process and no central authority, tend to be wracked by vendettas, slander, and petty politics rather than filled with deep trust. They are easily manipulated by fast-talking actors who know how to radiate sincerity and appeal to personal goals. Formal process could guarantee some thoughtful review of these actors' exciting presentations before the group commits to them.

One of the most important processes is the procedure for conflict resolution. Justice is not a natural result of unconscious social dynamics; arriving at good decisions in an atmosphere of emotional conflict requires work. Shaffer and Anundsen present a practical procedure in their book[18]. Conflict resolution depends on re-establishing the commitment of all parties to the goals they share, and removing the feeling that those goals are threatened. If that can't be accomplished, then the conflict will probably result in lasting divisions.

Perfect people might not need to create any formal process, but people in the real world benefit from humane and consensual structures within which they are free to play the roles they have chosen. Within a structured (but not iron-fisted) approach, there is ample opportunity for deep trust to develop between particular individuals.

3: De-Emphasizing Judgment of Character

As explained above, negative judgment of character is one of the most persistent sources of conflicts in spiritual groups. By shifting the model of spiritual progress from a test-based to a self-paced approach, some of the pressures that encourage negative judgments can be reduced. In this model, individuals have the responsibility to decide for themselves whether they have internalized the symbols and formulae of an initiation, or achieved results from a practice, but they are free to ask others for their help in coming to this decision. It may take time for initiations and practices to have an effect, but time limits can be applied impersonally. The teachers become resources for the students rather than the scales on which their souls are weighed.

Initiations can be refocused away from derogatory models of the old self. Severing

candidates from their old status is a necessary part of any initiation, under the van Gennep model accepted by anthropologists[19], but this severing does not have to be a moralistic condemnation; it can simply mark the passage. Exaggerated insults screen out candidates who don't suffer from low self esteem and inflate the egos of those already initiated. For instance, consider the "formula of the neophyte" of Freemasonry and the Golden Dawn, as accurately described by Aleister Crowley:

This formula has for its "first matter" the ordinary man entirely ignorant of everything and incapable of anything. He is therefore represented as blindfolded and bound.... It will be seen that the effect of this whole ceremony is to endow a thing inert and impotent with balanced motion in a given direction.... [T]he first matter of the work... is so muddled that many operations are required to unify it.[20]

It is worth noting that this comes from a tradition, Thelema, which claims to be free of the "Sin-Complex"! The same deprecating assumptions are present in many other traditions. If groups instead performed their initiations in a way that respected both the old and the new status while drawing a clear boundary between them, they might find that over time their memberships would gain self-esteem and lose their thirst for superficial condemnation.

One objection to self-paced instruction is that the mystic path is a dangerous one, and aspirants left to their own pace would find themselves driven mad by premature revelation. However, if this were so, the explosive growth of mystical books open to everyone during this century would have stocked the asylums with casualties. In fact, according to my friends who have worked in the mental health system, it is very difficult to find anyone who was driven mad by a mystical path. When I have learned of magicians who went insane, even casual investigation has revealed non-magical reasons: for instance, they were diagnosed as schizophrenic before they began to practice, or they became amphetamine addicts. People generally have little problem defending themselves against disturbing spiritual insights - ordinary defense mechanisms are quite effective in blocking out spiritual experience. It takes work to open oneself to such things, and the doors readily slam shut, as every backslider can attest.

4: Applying Therapeutic Resources

As mentioned above, Israel Regardie urged every spiritual aspirant to first get psychotherapy. If a year or two of regular therapy were a condition of membership in spiritual groups, they might find themselves less troubled than they are today.

For people in religious groups, an outside counselor who is free from conflicts of interest is invaluable. Because the higher-ups are themselves involved with the social functioning and belief system of the group, it is dangerous to be entirely frank with them, and most people have more sense than to try.

One possibility that makes good economic sense is to sponsor professional group treatment as part of the community. The objection could be raised that spiritual groups

serve many of the same purposes as therapy groups. However, they do so in a way that is fraught with defensiveness, conflicts of interest, and lack of empiricism. It is instructive to contrast Eric Berne's forthright and self-critical discussion of the pitfalls of group treatment[21] with Shaffer and Anundsen's cheerleading for community. Therapists have long cultivated research into the problems of their methods, while communities treat such inquiries as threats.

5: Separating Activities by Goal

Consider the fact that people use Christian churches to find sexual partners. This appears hypocritical, given the disdain for sexuality that is part of the Christian tradition. Yet churches that fail to provide an outlet for this natural urge may find their repression having the opposite effect, turning their holiest ceremonies into virtual singles bars. Rather than engaging in a destructive process of denial, most churches sponsor social gatherings as an outlet for this drive and others.

More generally, the potential for conflict of goals may be reduced by separating activities according to goal. People who are interested in a spiritual community for educational reasons do not necessarily want to endure an hour of social chatter to get an hour of instruction every week, for example. The goals of contact and approval can be separated from the goals of education and guidance; this will enable the group to serve more people, rather than driving away people with more limited goals. A healthy group should satisfy most of the goals people have for communities, but it should not require people to participate in activities that are of little or no interest to them. Otherwise, they are bound to become frustrated, perhaps even to divorce themselves from the community altogether.

6: Widening the Scope of Belief

Spiritual communities in the West give lip service to freedom of belief, but this usually only means that choices are presented in a few clearly identified areas. For instance, some groups grant latitude on the afterlife, but are adamant about the accuracy of astrology and the extrapsychological reality of spell effects.

True liberalization is difficult. Even people who do not suffer from low self esteem often confuse disagreement with insult, and introducing flexibility and ambiguity into a group's belief system undercuts the goals of guidance and power. It is important to recognize that a declaration of liberty does not create freedom of thought: informal required beliefs can be harder to address than formal dogmas. Activities are necessary.

Burning your holy book is unlikely to help; a ritualized disavowal acts as a safety valve, much like the Christian Feast of Fools[22], and strengthens the reigning beliefs. Instead, participate in interfaith dialogue. Reward challenging perspectives by publishing them and discussing them in a collegial way. Sponsor friendly debates between opposing points of view, and list pros and cons of central tenets. Most of all, encourage individuals to accept disagreement and rely less on certainty as part of their spiritual growth.

Conclusion

People hurt by spiritual communities may find themselves abruptly friendless and isolated. An improved understanding of the factors that predispose groups towards conflicts and problems may assuage their pain. Catastrophe can be a spur to gain insight. And of course, more self-aware communities are less likely to accidentally hurt their members. If individuals and groups can transcend the defensiveness that results from blameful and moralistic approaches to group dynamics, they will find themselves better able to reap the rewards of community, and even to derive benefits from problems and failures.

Notes

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Theory of Divination

by Tim Maroney (1990)

"Divination" is the production of information by magical, occult, or supernatural means. Tarot cards, I Ching, astrology, and the other well-known oracles are forms of divination.

Many other forms of divination are known, such as the prophesying of the Pythoness at the ancient shrine of Apollo at Delphi; oneiromancy or dream interpretation; geomancy, divination by making dots in a tray of sand; bibliomancy, flipping randomly to a passage in a book (usually the Bible); chiromancy or palm-reading; necromancy, communing with dead souls; pyromancy or divination by flames; crytallomancy or crystal-gazing; ornithomancy, interpretation of the flights and cries of birds; and, of course, the Tibetan milk-bottle method of Special Agent Dale Cooper.

There are numerous theories of how divination works, or does not work. I will attempt to present a reasonably objective survey of the theories, not neglecting the most skeptical or farfetched.

The discussion is general and need not be taken as applying strictly to the Tarot. Some of the theories apply only to methods of divination which are manually controlled by the diviner, but other theories apply equally well to all methods.

Sub-Topics:

Unconscious Mind
Synchronicity
Order from Chaos
Spirits of Wisdom
Magical Alphabet
Reader & Querent
Telling the Future
Unconscious Mind

Where does the information of divination come from? One answer is that it comes from the unconscious portions of the human mind.

The unconscious mind is composed of all those parts of the mind which are active but which are not apparent to the conscious, speaking parts of the mind. The unconscious was a mainstay of the psychoanalytic theories popular early in the twentieth century, but it has survived the collapse of those pre-scientific theories. It now appears in some modern cognitive and neurological theories of the psyche. After all, it's obvious that there is a great deal of information processing of which we are unaware.

The theory of divination by the unconscious mind is plainly applicable to some forms of divination, such as dream interpretation and the oracle at Delphi, but the theory is not as clear with respect to manual oracles, such as Tarot cards, the I Ching, and geomancy. How does the information travel from the unconscious mind to the hands, or to the interpretation?

One of the common answers bears on the theory of Order from Chaos. This answer holds that the patterns generated by a manual oracle are truly random. All the information is created by the mind struggling to make order out of the oracular chaos. In this version of "Order from Chaos", the emerging pattern is assumed to come from the unconscious mind, and so to provide a "window" into the unconscious. A Tarot spread is a sort of Rorschach blot.

Another popular answer says that perhaps the unconscious mind determines the physical result of the oracle. The unconscious is supposed to be watching the diviner's progress very carefully and controlling the motions of the diviner's hands so that the oracle takes a particular shape. Whether this can actually happen has not been subjected to rigorous experiment.

Finally, the unconscious mind may use psychic powers of some kind to shape the oracle; for instance, telekinesis, or perhaps the manipulation of probabilities. No such psychic powers have ever been shown to exist, but it is an attractive theory to many people, and in practice it is probably the most popular version of the theory of the unconscious mind.

In the theories of psychic powers or unconscious determination, note the effects of practice. The unconscious mind is no more infallible than the conscious mind, so the

more spreads it performs, the less chance it has of flubbing the shuffle.

The question remains of why we would want to contact the unconscious mind at all.

The most common view in occult or parapsychological circles is that the unconscious mind is the repository of immense wisdom, perhaps through contact with divine beings, the ultimate ground of being, the higher self, or psychic powers.

A more mundane psychological justification is that the conscious and unconscious minds can be considered excessively separated, or even at odds. In some psychological theories of transformation the goal is to bring the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind closer to each other, so that the whole mind may function more harmoniously. An oracular practice might be effective in teaching the two minds to work together and to respect each others' interests.

The most mundane answer says that two heads are better than one. The unconsciousness is no better or worse than the consciousness, and there is no special merit from bringing the two closer as a process of self-transformation. But just as it is valuable to discuss problems with someone else (depending, of course, on the other person -- this principle should not encourage you to pester Manuel Noriega or Tammy Faye Bakker with your problems), so it is valuable to see what the unconscious mind thinks about issues. It may be right or wrong, but a more rounded perspective will likely result from hearing its side.

In either of the more mundane answers -- perhaps even in the occult one -- it is important to note that one is not opening a doorway into Absolute Truth. One is merely learning how the unconscious mind feels about the issue. So, a reading of success or failure would not necessarily show that an endeavor really was so fated. It would show only that the unconscious mind was of an optimistic or pessimistic opinion.

Synchronicity

Synchronicity is a parapsychological concept usually attributed to the psychotherapist Carl Jung. Jung called it "an acausal connecting principle"; that is, apparently separate events are meaningfully connected by synchronicity, outside the normal laws of cause and effect. In Tarot, the seemingly unconnected events linked by synchronicity are the shuffling of the deck of cards on one hand, and the meaning which is incorporated in the fall of those cards on the other.

However, the root idea is far older than Jung. Synchronicity is the mystical idea that there are no accidents, or that every event is an interaction between God and the soul. No matter how arbitrary it may seem to be, each event actually contains spiritual meaning, and wisdom largely consists in unwinding this hidden meaning behind the surface of events.

Synchronicity is a common explanation of random oracles such as the Tarot, I Ching,

tea leaves, and ornithomancy, or reading the flights of birds. The appearance of randomness is only an illusion caused by our blindness to ultimate spiritual reality. The "random" fall of Tarot cards actually contains acausally transmitted information, which the diviner unwinds and interprets.

Granting this idea, why is the synchronistic information worth finding? The answer lies in the occult theory of the universe, which ascribes divinity (personal or impersonal) to the invisible acausal world. As the Tarot spread and other quasi-random synchronistic phenomena partake strongly of the nature of this hidden world, they are imbued with its characteristics of wisdom and illumination. In this way they become links to higher intelligence.

Synchronicity has been much in vogue in occultism for several decades. It is easy for anyone to verify that once they accept the principle of acausal connection, the number of apparent synchronicities increases to a remarkable degree.

Believers hold that this increase is a result of the soul becoming more attuned to God, or to its own true nature, or to the ultimate ground of reality, or to platypus people from Pluto (according to one UFO cult in New Jersey).

Skeptics hold that the increase in synchronicities is only a result of the desire to see them, and of practice in ascribing synchronistic meaning to disconnected events.

Synchronicity is practically impossible to put to any kind of formal test, so the impasse between believers and skeptics is likely to persist for quite a while. Neither side can muster a genuinely compelling argument. The believers' "tests" are far too informal for skeptics. Skeptics can't prove that the information isn't there, though -- they can only point out that its presence has not been proven. Neither side has the tools to convince the other.

Depending on the details of one's interpretation of synchronicity, it may or may not be appropriate to use automatic random oracles under a synchronistic interpretation. These are computer programs which shuffle the computerized cards or roll the digital dice themselves, with no opportunity for human intervention or for actual randomness.

Shuffling a physical deck of cards is a good approximation to a truly random process, because shuffling involves millions of variables few of whose values are known. Computers don't generate truly random numbers; they start with a "seed" number and perform complicated arithmetic transformations which turn it into another number, which becomes the seed for the next pass. The pseudo-random numbers generated by deterministic computer programs are not a good approximation to true randomness.

If your idea of synchronicity implies non-determinism through a chaotic process like shuffling, then automatic oracles are not for you. If your idea is a more all-embracing mystical notion, then complete automation should make no difference.

However, automatic oracles tend to be excessively distancing; the diviner does not feel involved in the process. For that reason, Tarot software should require manual influences on the fall of cards, much like physical shuffling. The user could, for instance, decide where to cut the deck, and the two stacks can then be riffled together. This brings the user into the process, and it should be compatible with any positive theory of divination.

Order From Chaos

The most skeptical assessment of divination holds that there really is no intrinsic meaning in an oracle. The cards just happen to fall a certain way, and no spirits, influences of the unconscious mind, or synchronistic factors put any information into their fall. The diviner is seeing ducks and horses in the clouds.

The straightforward application of this theory removes all motivation to perform divinations. Since there is no information in an oracle, divination is at best a waste of time.

However, skepticism and Tarot reading are not incompatible, though both skeptics and believers often assume otherwise. Modified skeptical positions hold that the process of attributing meaning to chaos can have positive effects, even though the meaning is merely an illusion in the mind.

Storytelling, for example, involves quasi-random factors in decisions on variables such as character attributes, settings, and plot structure. This would only be a problem if we failed to make a coherent story out of these decisions, or confused the story for reality.

A fiction writer might use the Tarot or other oracles for story guidance, while still convinced of the idea that the fall of cards is truly random. Similarly for other artists, but this approach is not confined to the arts. One might try to divine problems in one's real life under this theory, in hopes that adding information to the spread would lead to insights that would not have arisen through the unassisted thinking process.

Such a skeptical diviner would have total freedom to reject the reading, but believers in unconscious, synchronistic, or spiritualist theories of divination would not. If you believe that the spread really is meaningless, you are not bound to accept what it seems to say.

Another skeptical interpretation is that unconscious factors steer the process of interpretation -- not the fall of the cards, but the interpretation of their fall, a psychological process. Just as we do not decide consciously what to see in the clouds or in a Rorschach blot, we do not decide consciously what to see in a Tarot spread, but the outcome reveals something of our unconscious minds. We see patterns that we are unconsciously predisposed to see, and we learn about ourselves by revealing our predispositions.

Spirits of Wisdom

The most occult theory of the workings of divination is that the oracle is manipulated by

spirits. The spirits may work through one's hands, or influence the oracle through more direct magical means such as telekinesis.

This leaves many questions open. What is the nature of the spirits? Are the spirits personal or universal? Why is it valuable to learn what they think about an issue? How do spirits manipulate the oracle? Why do they consent to being used in this fashion? Is there one general spirit per oracle, or a single ruler of all forms of divination, or do different spirits share responsibility over the same oracle, or is there one divinatory spirit per person?

All of these questions have any number of answers, so this entry can only give a shallow survey. Apologies are tendered to any theory which is underrepresented here.

One may take the approach favored by the more intolerant of the monotheistic factions. All spirits of magic are demons, that is, fallen angels. Different demons are delegated to divinations at the convenience of the infernal hierarchy. The oracle is manipulated through the powers which all angels, fallen or not, possess by virtue of their special creation by God. Demons are real spiritual personages having an objective existence in the spiritual world. They consent to being used by the diviner because the practice of divination leads to eternal damnation for the practitioner -- as do all magical practices not formally approved by the Bible and one's church. Demons earnestly desire that the living share the demons' misery in Hell, and divination is one way of bringing about this foul end.

A person accepting this model of divination would avoid all practices of divination beyond prayer to God and perhaps bibliomancy, the random selection of a verse from the Bible. The idea that angels might manipulate Tarot cards is, of course, damnable heresy.

An equally anti-divinatory theory is the purely skeptical. Discorporate spirits are a traditional fantasy, and assuming their existence is nothing more than self-delusion.

There is a more moderate skeptical view, known to many students of Western Magick, which is really a form of the Unconscious Mind theory. Spiritual beings are viewed as a metaphor for processes of the unconscious mind, which to some extent mimic the structure of the conscious mind and can be seen as "splinter intelligences". Spirits do exist in a sense, but they are strictly personal and even (after a fashion) mundane, being merely another class of psychological phenomenon. They cooperate in divination either because the conscious mind can compel them to do so, or because they understand that their own interests coincide with the overall interests of the psyche. That is, they are either controllable or benign.

A more occult form of the spirit theory holds that spirits are real entities of the spiritual world, but either benign or controllable in temperament, as above. They may influence the oracle either through control of the magician's hands, or through magical powers of some sort.

Most occult systems would hold that a single god (albeit with many names and forms) rules all divination, while each individual form of divination (Tarot, geomancy, I Ching, etc.) has its own ruling spirit or a class of related spirits, who are invoked or evoked for each divination. Thoth is a good choice for an overall spiritual patron of all forms of divination, while the spirits specific to each kind of divination usually go without individual names beyond "spirits of geomancy", etc., and the names of the particular signs of the oracle. Sometimes the classes of spirits are given names or attributes beyond the names and attributes of the system of divination; gnomes are said to rule geomancy, while Mercurial spirits are said to rule the Tarot.

In an alternate occult formula, a specific spirit may be invoked or evoked for a particular act of divination, its identity being harmonious with the nature of the question or problem. A Martial spirit might be evoked to answer a question pertaining to conflict. However, the nature of the spirit must be suited not only to the question but to the oracle. It would do little good to evoke a Mercurial spirit to answer with geomancy, an essentially earthy oracle; nor to evoke an elemental to answer a question through the lofty and abstract I Ching.

Whatever the form of the spirit theory, one should note that it is not without danger. In fact, divination itself is somewhat dangerous, regardless of the theory. For this reason, it is probably wise to perform some simple protective spell (such as the Pentagram Ritual) before any act of divination, to keep out malign spirits and influences and encourage benign ones; or even just to give a feeling of greater security. This is also a useful technique in combination with the theory of the unconscious mind, so as to banish self-destructive influences.

A short prayer to the god of divination (e.g., Tahuti) would be effective, or a casting of the wards as in traditional occult practice. One need not be unskeptical to recognize the psychological benefits of working in a symbolically cleansed environment.

Here is an adaptation of a traditional Golden Dawn preparatory prayer or spell, suited to the use of the electronic diviner. Touch the side of the computer with the left hand, and hold the wand upright in the right, or hold the right hand in the classic gesture of consecration (first and second fingers upright, ring finger and pinky curled lightly toward the palm), and say:

I invoke thee, I A O, that thou wilt send Heru, the great Angel that is set over the operations of this Secret Wisdom, to lay his hand invisibly upon these crystal and copper thought-forms of art, that thereby we may obtain true knowledge of hidden things, to the glory of thine ineffable Name. Amen.

Magical Alphabet

Divination delivers information from some source to the conscious mind. To accomplish this, any oracle must communicate in some more or less intelligible language.

Looked at another way, any systematic oracle is a language in itself. By various combinations of the symbols of this language, all manner of things may be communicated.

This sort of language, such as the language of the Tarot or the Kabala, is sometimes referred to as a magical alphabet.

That a magical alphabet is invariably vague is its chief objection among skeptics. The argument is that since the symbols of various oracles are so diffuse, there is no real evidence that they communicate anything -- all the meaning is built up in the mind from the random outcome of the oracle, and various tactics of "cold reading" are used to add a layer of apparent meaning. This theory is addressed under Order from Chaos.

The symbols of a magical alphabet are worthy subjects for meditation. Aleister Crowley held that reading Tarot cards in oracles is a lower method than simple meditation on their meaning. R. G. H. Siu said the same of the I Ching, even declining to give the instructions for divination, which had to be added in a publisher's preface. However, divination may, as Crowley also suggested, be the best way to learn the alphabet.

Reader & Querent

In traditional Tarot divination, there is a reader and a querent. The reader acts as a consultant on the Tarot, using it to illuminate an issue for the querent. The reader typically charges a small fee for this service. Some sources insist that a reader is necessary; otherwise, the prejudices of the querent will dominate the reading. Cynics might point out that this insistence is of financial value to people who derive income from reading Tarot cards.

The way to structure a two-person reading depends on the theory. In all cases, the querent asks the question and the reader interprets the fall of the cards. The fall of the cards is determined by shuffling, which may be a joint process, or it may be done entirely by the reader or by the querent.

If the theory of unconscious determination is used, then the reader should shuffle the cards, though the querent may cut them to feel more involved with the process. The reader should watch the cut carefully so the necessary information may be transmitted to the unconscious mind. The reader is skilled in determining the fall of the cards; the querent is not.

If the synchronicity theory is used, then the querent or the reader may shuffle the cards. It makes no difference, since the synchronistic meaning comes through purely random factors.

If the theory of spirits is used, then again the reader should shuffle, since ordinary people do not particularly want to channel spirits to get a Tarot reading. If they wanted to get their hands that wet, they would probably do the divination themselves. Again, having the querent cut the deck is a meaningless symbol of involvement, but the spirits

arrange the deck after the querent cuts it.

If the theory of order from chaos is used, it makes no difference who or what shuffles, just as with synchronicity.

Telling the Future

The popular view of Tarot cards is that they "tell the future". That is the meaning of the popular synonym for divination, "fortune-telling". Any sort of question may be asked of the Tarot cards, which does not exclude telling the future. But that is not the only end to which the cards may be put.

When telling the future, the questions of predestination and psychic powers inevitably arise. If we can accurately read the future, then the future must already exist in some sense, and we must have some way of viewing it.

On the question of predestination, science and philosophy are inconclusive. Modern physics is clear that the world is not deterministic; there are many experiments with physics on a small scale that show nature to be probabilistic. Many things happen on the sub-atomic scale without any real reason, simply because it was more or less likely that they would happen and they wound up happening or not. This would seem to fly in the face of predestination; the future state of the universe depends on truly random and unpredictable events.

But these events may be truly random yet, in a sense, already have happened. Time may be viewed as a fourth dimension like our usual three spatial dimensions. If so, then one may take a static view of the universe's history, in which the whole of time is a static construct when viewed from without, that is, from a five-dimensional perspective. The exact nature of the "arrow of time" has yet to be clearly determined, and it is impossible to say now whether a higher-dimensional traveller would see the past as still with us and the future as already laid out.

The question of psychic powers is even more difficult. No such powers have ever been shown to exist in any replicable experiment; at best, such experiments barely squeak in under the margin of significance, and then only after averaging thousands of trials which are not individually significant.

Yet many people believe in them regardless, and these people erect theories to explain them. One of the more popular theoretical ideas of psychic powers is that the psyche somehow exists in a higher dimension. From a higher-dimensional viewpoint it might be possible to look out over the four-dimensional history of the world and see what is to come.

This is written in 1990 in San Francisco, and it seems rather telling to this writer that of the great events which have taken place recently -- the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the independence of Eastern Europe, the San Francisco earthquake -- none were foretold by psychics. One would think such momentous happenings would fairly blaze

forth before a psychic eye, yet they didn't.

It is probably best to use a weaker form of the precognition idea, which does not involve a predestined future or psychic powers. Instead, the unconscious mind is viewed as having the power to perceive more or less where some events are heading, and to present its views on the subject -- which may be right or wrong -- through a Tarot reading. Of course, the conscious mind can also make some predictions based on its knowledge. The idea is that the unconscious mind is attentive to different factors and will make predictions the conscious mind could not.

Another "weak" form of precognition involves synchronicity. Events and Tarot readings are "riding the same waves", so one can cast light on the other.

Finally, it is best to take all answers about the future with a grain of salt. It is also wise to phrase questions in such a way that they ask for perspectives on what is happening and what has happened, and for guidance, rather than for outright predictions of the future.

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On the Definition of the Sacred

by Tim Maroney

At our present level of psychological understanding, we lack even the basics for a definition of such a vague term as "spirituality", except in terms of equally vague words such as "holy", "sacred", and "numinous". These terms can only be defined in terms of each other, so we have gained no real understanding or clarity with such definitions. We are merely playing shuffleboard with syllables. "Sacred" means "consecrated or holy"; "holy" means "divine or sacred"; "numinous" means "divine"; "divine" means "spiritual".

At some point in the future, our understanding of psychology may be such that we will be able to break these concepts down into genuinely simpler concepts, such as the interrelationship of neural clusters. But for now, they remain irreducible absolutes.

In the face of these circularities, many mystics fall back to the position of no-definition, often expressed in terms of the inherent inadequacy of language to capture the ultimate ground of reality. The Tao that can be named is not the true Tao; katz! But the same is equally true of the phenomena we typically consider mundane and non-spiritual. No language can genuinely capture a single red rose, or the sound of jackhammers at 7:30 on a Saturday morning. Language is by nature a scaled-down model of reality which fails to partake of the wholeness of the phenomenon it describes. There is no reason that language should be any less useful in discussing the "numinous" than it is in discussing the rose or the hammer.

The true problem in description of the spiritual is lack of a vocabulary. "Red" as an experience can't really be defined any more than "holy" can. It is just that we all know what the word "red" refers to, having experienced the referent ourselves, and having

experienced the word in conjunction with its referent. Those who have experienced sacredness recognize it, and they may be able to suggest to each other a vocabulary for describing its particular manifestations. Those who do not know spirit will see this vocabulary as a meaningless jargon. But even those who know should be aware that they are not explaining spirit with their vocabulary. They are merely labelling it.

And yet, people persist in the silliest attempts to explain the spirit with labels. We are bombarded by totally foolish "definitions" such as "feelings out of the ordinary" (does this include the feeling of being rear-ended by a purple Volkswagen?) and "other dimensions of consciousness" (the term "dimension" is surpassed only by "evolution" in its use as a meaningless buzz-word by the metaphysically inclined). Non-definitions of this sort are in their way as good as any other terminology, because those who have known the spirit will recognize more or less what the speaker is talking about, but they are no more basic - and a good deal more fuzzy-minded - than "holy", "sacred", and the rest of the crew.

So let us take sacredness as an indefinable but recognizable absolute, and starting from there try to develop a taxonomy of sacred experiences. Immediately new problems arise. First, religions have long worked to develop these terminologies themselves, yet no two religions can agree on them. Second, being more or less familiar with these religious systems, we may find it difficult to avoid invisible but powerful assumptions built into them - or, more likely, we will not even try, treating these basic assumptions as unquestioned fact. Third, we may once again fall into nonsense of the "dimensions of consciousness" or "feelings out of the ordinary" kind, imagining that we are analyzing things into more basic concepts when we are only spinning out absurdity.

Probably the most common error is to refer to "states of consciousness". This terminology ignores the fact that there are as many states of consciousness as there are moments in the lives of all sentient beings. It's as if we are imagining the mind to be a car, with first gear the "mundane consciousness", second gear the first stages of "religious illumination", and so on. But the mind is far more complex than a car; it does not have clearly distinct modes of operation. Each of its "states" involves billions of variables. Not only is one person's meditative trance not the same state as another person's, it is not even the same state for the same person from meditation to meditation, or from moment to moment in a single session. We can speak of broad classes of similar experiences, but not of states of consciousness.

"Red" is not a "state of vision"; it is one component of a visual experience which has many other factors and which will never be precisely duplicated in another experience. We do not see vision in terms of "states", but in terms of highly complex, multidimensional phenomena. Is the sacred simpler and more mechanical than the visible?

"States of consciousness" is an example of all three kinds of errors: using the terminology of a single school, not questioning the assumptions underlying a terminology, and mistaking a meaningless label for serious analysis.

Another common error is the confounding of classes. For instance, we might divide spiritual experiences into the immanent and the transcendent. The former sees the unity (or voidness) of all phenomena; the latter sees all phenomena as transcended by some spiritual force or being outside the mundane world. This is a perfect valid measure of spiritual experiences, but it is not the only (or even the primary) measure. Many experiences are more similar to counterparts in the other class than they are to their classmates. Some belong in both classes or neither.

There are any number of spiritual measures, among which are static or dynamic, full or empty, harsh or soothing, personal or impersonal, free or structured, spontaneous or deliberate, passionate or arid, solitary or social, intellectual and emotional, differentiated and uniform, and so forth. We do not impose any useful taxonomy by putting one of these measurements above the others, dividing all spiritual experiences into type 1 and type 2. A static, full, harsh, impersonal, immanent experience is more like a static, full, harsh, impersonal, transcendent experience than it is like a dynamic, empty, soothing, personal immanent experience. But if we were committed to making a basic division between immanent and transcendent experiences, we would have to say that any immanent experience is more like any other immanent experience than it is like any transcendent experience.

In summary, no language is truly adequate to description of spirituality, but some terminologies are less adequate than others. Terminologies which claim to analyze but do not break notions down into more basic notions are nonsense. Terminologies which impose an oversimplified linear structure on the multidimensional nature of spiritual experience are misleading. Terminologies based on unexamined assumptions about the structure of the psyche and the superiority of some experiences to others are worse than useless.

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Twilight Crossing

Twilight Crossing is a magical assembly dedicated to assisting its members in the pursuit of their artistic and spiritual satisfaction.

0. Legends

A. Thirty centuries ago, dark crossroads were haunted by Hekate, earth goddess (or demon) of magic and sorcery. Hekate was far older than the "classical" gods of the Greeks. She was one of that band of primeval deities known as Titans who were deposed by the patriarchal conquerors of the Grecian lands. The myths were rewritten to parallel politics: the Titans were cast down from Heaven to the pits of Tartarus by Zeus, the God-King; yet Hekate had always lived there beneath the ground. Alone of the Titans she retained her status in later myth. Of the elder goddesses of the region, she was one of many retained by the invaders, but the only one not reduced to a pretty ankle and a breeder. Every home in Athens was fronted by an altar to Hekate: her

worship was strongest in the Greek city-state with the smallest amount of centralized control and with the least power given over to a King.

B. Ghost-herding Hekate, with her hair wound with snakes, dogs howling about her heels, and a guttering torch borne in one hand, represented a vital current of underworld power too strong for the force of arms to suppress. Her old Colchian sorceresses, Medea and Circe, became oddly sympathetic villainesses: their old herbal drugs were fermented to poisons, their sex magics were retold as child murders, their shamanistic animal transmutations were reduced to spells that waylaid careless adventurers; yet as a token of "respect", each became the lover and helpmate of great heroes - Jason over Medea, and Odysseus over Circe. Hekate's great sorceresses were thus degraded more than the goddess herself. In the West's Middle Ages, these legendary sorceresses became the models of those most feared women, the witches, and Hekate was degraded to their unholy Queen. Those dead who were refused the sacraments were buried at crossroads, where once sacrifices to Hekate were held. And all without any change in their basic attributes, representing those qualities sacred to paganism which despots abhor in any hands but their own :- will, beauty, immortality, knowledge, power, mystery, ecstasy, love. In middle Christendom all these became crimes.

C. In middle and modern times, this current of dark power has come to be known as "Satanic" by analogy to Satan, the chief demon of the monotheistic triad. Like Hekate, Satan represents the underworld, sorcery, and opposition to the ruling gods. Satan's name is the Hebrew word for "enemy" he is identified with the Serpent that brought humanity to ruin, and in legend he was cast down to Hell from Heaven. In the Zoroastrian religion a similar devil was known as Ahriman, a name which also means "enemy". Zoroastrianism, endorsed and enforced by the Persian Kings, saw all existence as a war between Ahura Mazda, the god of light and the Sun, and Ahriman, the dark god of evil and snakes. The ancient Egyptians feared Set, an earlier form of Satan, dweller in the demon-haunted land beneath the earth through which the Sun-King fought his way each night. Set was aided by his serpentine ally, the monstrous Apep, and a host of magical snakes. Set had been one of the greatest and most ancient gods of Egypt, but his people were conquered. For a long while he enjoyed a Hekatean status as the necessary ruler of the darker aspects of life, and he was degraded into more and more a demon as time wore on. By the time of the mythical Exodus, Set was a generic enemy, and glorious tales of battle became tales of victory of the Sun over Set and his minions. Just so the early Hebrew scriptures use "satan" as a generic term for their military enemies in Palestine.

D. A pattern emerges from the "anti-gods" of history. Time and again, serpent deities representing both the underworld and magic have been declared inconvenient and driven from their status by official violence, figured in myth by a Sun-God who is also the King. It is not enough to forget them as most deposed deities are forgotten; they must be demonized.

E. How does this demonization serve the needs of those in power? Authority feeds on enmity. The exercise of power is easiest to justify against an absolutely evil enemy who

plainly demands the strictest opposition. Once this license for power against evil is obtained by consent of the people, it is easily applied against the people themselves. Most will never object to the ferreting out of "agents of evil" in their midst, will indeed gleefully support such a campaign of persecution. By supporting the authorities they vicariously exercise the same unfettered power. It is very comforting to be one of the agents of shining good standing firm against unimaginable depravity. But reality is not obliging in providing absolute evils for the use of Kings; all enemies are more understandable and sympathetic when more is known about their motives and history. Imaginary enemies do not evoke this difficulty, and once the belief in imaginary enemies - Satan, the International Communist Conspiracy, whatever - is established, it is easy to represent real people as agents of these ultimate enemies. Hekate would hardly have found a friendly home in Sparta. The common beliefs about Hekate, Ahriman, Marx, and the rest serve a vital political purpose.

F. But why are underworld and sorcerous deities especially demonized? Officialdom is chiefly opposed to the individual will: the power that authority delights in exercising is the power of imposing its will on others. The opposition to this authoritarian will is the individual fount of creativity and unpredictability. In psychology, this fount is called the unconscious mind, the obscure and unseen intelligence which motivates us all to seek our own paths. The unconscious mind, the dark side of the psyche, is the symbolic meaning of the mythical underworld or "Hell." Tyrants are right to fear this deep well of power and to frighten their subjects away from it. Sorcery is a symbol of independent action, unauthorized and unregulable, obeying only the laws of the dark side and scorning the workings of temporal power. Tyrants who believe in its "magical" power fear it for pragmatic reasons, but these mundane concerns reflect the nature of the sorcerous myth. The individual sorceress could, like Medea, shatter the structures of authority if they became intolerably alienating. Sorcery is the mythological face of art. All good artists are sorcerors; spell-weavers; subversives; Satanists.

G. The veneration of demons is not, as is commonly believed, the "worship of evil", but an escape from the authoritarian mentality of "us vs. them", of allies and enemies, of repressive and arbitrary regulations expressed for power itself rather than for the general interest, of good and evil as absolute forces in the world rather than as subjective judgments applied to human behavior. All these naive or corrupt political influences are banished from the crossroads at twilight by the irresistible, but subtle, influence of Hekate, snake-woman, Medea's muse, friend and mistress of the hounds of Hell; they are cracked and ruined by this sorceress behind and beyond all sorcery.

H. Among the major exponents of this "Satanism" or "Diabolism" have been poets and playwrights, musicians and magicians: such as Rabelais, Blake, Shelley, Baudelaire, Swinburne, Shaw, Crowley, and (most recently) Galas. The assembly known as Twilight Crossing has an interest in continuing and expanding on this tradition, known as the "Satanic school" in the Oxford English Dictionary, without dogmatically adhering to any one creator's conception of it.

I. The symbol of the crossing is significant beyond its Hekatean correspondence (but in

ways that reflect on that symbolism). Conventional magical orders, covens, and the like, teach a path, a sequence of initiations or similar steps, more or less fixed in structure and adapted little if at all to the individual. Twilight Crossing is instead a meeting of paths, an intersection of ways: yet a particular meeting point, a crossroad sacred to Hekate, rather than a union of all paths. There may be those people whose roads do not touch this crossroad, but we welcome meetings with them at other intersections; and we remind them (and ourselves) that Hekate may live even where she is not at once apparent.

1. Membership

A. The only requirement for membership in Twilight Crossing is a shared interest in the Hekatean or Satanic current expressed in poetry, theatre, music, magic, and other arts.

B. The Crossing makes no promises of magical powers, exalted spiritual degrees, contact and contract with discorporate beings, nor simple answers to difficult questions. Nor does it forbid its members or assemblies from asserting such powers, degrees, contacts, or answers.

C. Members of Twilight Crossing are free to believe what they will, but they are expected to scrutinize their beliefs to avoid dogmatism and folly.

D. Members of Twilight Crossing are free to behave as they will, but they are expected to monitor their actions to avoid disrespect for their own interests and the interests of others.

E. Twilight Crossing officially supports the rights of all human beings as put forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All forms of discrimination on grounds of race, gender, national origin, social class, sexual preference, religion, creed, and so forth are expressly forbidden at the Crossing. The only exception is that assemblies formed exclusively of members of oppressed groups, such as women or African-Americans, are permitted.

F. The Hekatean symbolism used to define the Crossing must not be taken as a mandate of literal belief in such a being, or in any spiritual being. Nor must the use of the symbolism of sorcery be taken as mandating a belief in the "paranormal" or extraspsychological powers of the black arts. Such matters are left to the individual judgment of members.

G. Rituals of initiation, meditation, invocation, celebration, and so forth are sponsored by assemblies of the Crossing and by the Crossing as a whole for the artistic and spiritual benefit of the members. In all such rituals, the widest possible latitude of beliefs is to be embraced, so that no one should feel excluded because of the integrity of their intellectual conscience. Rituals and other works sponsored by the Crossing as a whole are to avoid all definite statements of belief or disbelief in such matters as the primacy of a certain artistic movement or the reality of spiritual beings and psychic powers. It is accepted that particular assemblies may be composed only of those who share an

opinion on certain matters.

2. Hierarchy

A. All hierarchy is suspect. The Satanic school stands firmly against all abuses of power, all attempts to reduce living beings to positions in an organizational chain, all stamping of people with formal estimates of merit, all dehumanization and forced conformity.

B. The Crossing has no doctrines other than those intended to guarantee the freedom of its membership and of all people. To the extent that the Crossing has any fixed rules at all, they are meant only as pragmatic guidelines, and should never be considered to overrule the freedom of thought of any member. Any member or assembly finding itself in conflict with the "rules" of the Crossing should consider carefully before leaving the group, and should instead strive to preserve the meeting of the paths. If the free resolution of this conflict requires a change in the rules of the Crossing, then let the other members and assemblies not balk, but gratefully accept.

C. There are no degrees, grades, or titles at the Crossing proper. All members are considered equal.

D. Should it become necessary to impose some governing council on the Crossing due to the size of its membership, all its offices shall be selected by the full membership, and those who hold such positions shall not be considered superior to other members in any essential way. The full membership shall also have the opportunity to determine the structure of any governing body and to remove unfit members from leadership via the democratic process. All these votes will be decided by simple plurality, but no vote is valid without the votes of more than one-half of all members.

E. The founder and early members of Twilight Crossing enjoy no special status within the group, though they are free to pursue whatever offices are open to other members.

F. Individuals are generally accepted without difficulty. If a member challenges an admission, and another seconds the objections, then a general vote will be taken among the members. The admission is rejected on a two-thirds vote of those participating. (There is no voting quorum.) A member may also be ejected by a vote of two-thirds in similar fashion. Excessive dogmatism or exclusivism, or radical disregard for the rights of others, are the only grounds for refusal or removal of an individual.

F. This foundation document and any other rules may be amended by a vote of three quarters of the membership.

3. Assemblies

A. Twilight Crossing harbors various assemblies, or "special interest groups", dedicated to particular shared interests within the Satanic school. These are chiefly intended to be oriented towards the execution of various artistic projects, but may also form research groups, social groups, informal discussion groups not explicitly devoted to any particular

project, and so on.

B. Rules concerning freedom of belief are somewhat relaxed within the assemblies, so that people who share particular opinions may work together on projects dependent on those conditions. For instance, a group dedicated to atheism and to the freeing of members' minds from all belief in literal gods would certainly fall under the aegis of the Satanic school and Twilight Crossing in particular, but would be incapable of meaningfully including members who did believe in literal gods. Similarly, a group especially dedicated to occult spellcasting intended to work effects at a distance could hardly benefit from the presence of skeptics. And likewise for the reverse of these opinions.

C. Assemblies are permitted to draw their doctrinal basis more narrowly than the Crossing as a whole, but they are expected to deal with their differences from other opinions as disagreements among reasonable people, rather than a special handle on the absolute truth which renders them the denizens of Olympus and others the denizens of Hell. Assemblies with apparently contradictory beliefs should appoint liaisons to each other and encourage dialog, but they should not shy away from argument as if intellectual competition were some unthinkable poison or rudeness.

D. These relaxed rules on doctrine should not be taken as a license for dogmatism. Limits on opinion are to be as unrestrictive as possible given the mission of the assembly and the nature of its shared interest. Any limits are to be drawn out explicitly when the assembly is proposed, and cannot be narrowed without recertification by the whole Crossing (as below) and by two-thirds of the entire assembly. Furthermore, an assembly should be so arranged that persons not sharing the assembly's common opinions would not be especially interested in joining its projects.

E. Assemblies are created by assent of the whole membership. A simple plurality of votes, with a voting quorum of fifty per cent, admits an assembly to the Crossing. A vote of two thirds, with the same quorum, dissolves an assembly. Excessive dogmatism or exclusivism, or radical disregard for the rights of others, are the only grounds for refusal or dissolution of an assembly.

4. Initiations

A. In no case is attendance at any initiation ritual mandatory for continued membership in Twilight Crossing as a whole, though it may be required for membership in a particular assembly.

B. No initiation or other ritual sponsored by the Crossing or any assembly is to be taken as conferring any intrinsic spiritual superiority over those who have not taken the degree. Such rituals represent a personal progress along a particular path of artistic or spiritual refinement. Initiations should be structured in an open, not linear, fashion to help assure this, though this is only a recommendation.

C. It is acceptable that one initiation should have some other as a prerequisite so long

as there remain multiple threads of initiation - that is, so long as the initiatory paths of different assemblies are open to all.

D. It is acceptable that those undergoing initiation rituals should be sworn to secrecy concerning the contents of those rituals, but only so that the rituals do not lose their efficacy through predictability.

E. Individuals are not to be subjected to unanticipated physical jeopardy, or any deliberate harm of any kind, by any initiation or other ritual at Twilight Crossing.

5. Relations to Other Groups

A. Members are free to sponsor their own rituals, groups, and so forth which involve practices frowned on at the Crossing, and to belong to such groups sponsored by others. Twilight Crossing encourages its members to join any and all religious or artistic groups which seem fit to them while members of the Crossing, as was often the case among the pagan mystery traditions of ancient Rome.

B. Twilight Crossing is especially interested in maintaining good relations with other groups which define themselves as occult, Satanic, or Neo-Pagan in orientation, all of which are words which describe the Crossing as well. However, to the extent that the practices of these groups conflict with the values of Twilight Crossing, those groups should expect a certain amount of reasonable criticism from its members. This criticism is a vital and important function of the values of the Crossing; it is not intended to damage relations with other groups, but neither should members of the Crossing fail to respect their own interests in free intellectual exercise by artificially restricting the scope of their comments.

C. Despite its orientation towards the Titans and Satan, the Crossing has no fixed teaching relative to Classical Greek mythology nor towards Christianity and the other two major monotheistic religions. A person holding any of these traditions in high regard should not feel constrained by that opinion against membership in Twilight Crossing. Just as it is by no means obvious that a modern Christian must oppose Buddhism simply because it teaches that God is deluded, neither is it clear that a freethinking Christian must oppose the redeemed symbolism of Hekate or Satan merely because their tradition has been one of the demonizers. The way is especially open to contacts with those modern Christian individuals and groups which share the Crossing's distaste for dogma and repression.

D. The Crossing is critical of many temporal authorities. All governments drawn to date are flawed by authoritarianism and narrow-mindedness. Its right to criticize officialdom is guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nonetheless, it is not seeking the violent overthrow of these governments as a matter of policy. Its official position advocates peaceful revolution through education, just as happened in the states of Eastern Europe shortly before the founding of the Crossing. Medea overthrew the rulers of Corinth through her sorcerous knowledge, not by staging a coup. In the Twilight Crossing's symbolism, sorcery means art and knowledge, not the force of arms.

Individual members of the Crossing may support one or more revolutionary movements throughout the world, but they do so as individuals and not as members of the Crossing. No project of Twilight Crossing or any of its assemblies seeks the violent overthrow of any government.

E. The Crossing does, however, refuse to recognize laws which stand in contravention to the rights of artistic and religious freedom, and freedom of thought and privacy, such as restrictions against sexual practices between consenting and sexually mature persons and against the voluntary consumption of consciousness-altering drugs. From the prehistoric past through the present, many cultures have incorporated both sex and drugs into religious and artistic practices, and it has credibly been argued by some scholars that all religion derives from them. Religious prostitution and sacramental drugs have been common mysteries of pagan religion from before the start of recorded history, and strong traces of both remain in the myths of monotheism as well. Twilight Crossing firmly insists that all people have the right to engage in sacred practices of these venerable types, and that no government or other agency has the right to interfere in them any more than in any exercise of freedom of religion or freedom of thought. Our patron sorceresses Medea and Circe had mastered every form of magic drug and herb, and of the arts of love; we would be untrue to their legend were we to turn away from their wisdom for mere political convenience.

6. Contact

Twilight Crossing is in the process of formation. Those interested in assisting in its creation or in forming assemblies may call or write the author of this document, Tim Maroney.

[Note: I shut down the project after about a dozen people expressed interest and an electronic mailing list was formed. Please don't write me about starting up Twilight Crossing again!]

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Pagan History

by Tim Maroney (1986)

Paganism is a loose word for the large variety of polytheistic, shamanistic, and mystical non-monotheistic religions. Paganism exists in all cultures, from paleolithic to technological, but has historically waxed and waned. The ancient Egyptians are an example of a highly pagan society; so are the ancient Romans; and all paleolithic cultures from the Old Stone Age to the present have strong pagan elements. An example of a less pagan culture would be the West for the last thousand years or so, since the centuries following the Fall of Rome. The domination of the Middle East by Christians and Moslems has also largely shut out paganism.

Characteristic of paganism is a tolerance for other paganistic ideas, even those that literally contradict one's own. Such persecutions as have been directed against

paganistic religions by each other are by-products of political struggles and mass population movements rather than ideologically motivated. The same is to some extent true of early Judaism, which was the direct inheritor to the traditions of a strongly pagan society. A slave revolt apparently led to a few hundred thousand slaves with no place to live; to get them, they butchered the inhabitants of pagan cities and took up residence in the cities themselves. They invoked their war god to justify this action. Similarly, when the beginnings of the modern Greek mythology were laid down, it was as a result of invading Northern barbarians supplanting the earlier (and somewhat gynocentric) Titan mythology with their imported religion, which grew more refined and less aggressive later on, as happened with Judaism.

Before it came under the thumb of monotheism, the West was dominated by the highly civilized Roman culture. The Roman Republic and Empire were characterized by an unusually large number of religions together in a single social whole, frequently sharing the same geography and even the same temples. This explicitly eclectic (or "syncretistic", as it is more usually known in studies of the Romans) synthesis is more similar to modern neo-paganism than any other form of historical paganism I know of. However, it ended after the Christian emperors took over and Rome fell.

The post-pagan West experienced frequent resurgences of paganism in various forms. If we date this at 1000 CE for convenience, we see first the Inquisitorial period, where paganism was punished with death and torture. Then there comes the Renaissance, in which pagan symbolism and ideas in art and philosophy were somewhat more common than explicitly Christian ones. The Renaissance lasted until the 16th century. Note that the Inquisitions lasted effectively until the Enlightenment period, and were bad during the Renaissance, but ceased to be mostly ideologically motivated after the first three centuries. The Inquisition had become a political arm of the Vatican, a force useful in many ways other than suppressing heresy. It spent much of its time accomplishing political, antifeminist, and covert goals of the Church. We see in the trial of the Templars in the fourteenth century that uncommonly faithful people were caught in a secular political struggle between the King of France and the Pope. They were routinely tortured, the usual prompted confessions were given, and they were executed, for reasons having nothing to do with ideology or heresy except as excuses.

It is also during the Renaissance that we begin to have evidence of what we may consider explicitly religious paganism again. Most of the grimoires we have date from this era; alchemists, often overtly Christian but employing pagan symbolism and texts, were most common during the Renaissance; the Kabbalah and Tarot originate in the Renaissance, forming the backbone of modern pagan symbolism. The Renaissance also saw the obscure origins of a rebirth, in improved form, of Greek humanism, technically pagan because of its suppression by Christian Rome and its use of theistic symbols.

The Reformation was again a less pagan period; Protestant rulers like Elizabeth and James carried out their own anti-heresy pogroms, annihilating most evidence of witchcraft. Of particular interest in the Reformation is Scot's "The Discoverie of

Witchcraft", which presents the humanist and rationalist perspective on witches which has generally triumphed today: that witch accusations were more often driven by factors such as ugliness, personal enmity, poverty, and so forth than on ideological grounds, and that in fact there were no witches. This is probably true only of the later Inquisitorial period. Earlier on, the Inquisition certainly did help in the temporary stamping out of paganism; so if pagans are witches, there were witches.

We need not bother much with Murray's supposedly anthropological study of English witchcraft in the Inquisitorial period, except to note that it has been devoutly accepted by many modern pagans, and to point out some of its flaws. Based on late Inquisitorial evidence and the consistency of the confessions obtained by the Inquistors, and tossing in some disjointed scraps of English folk history and legend, Murray asks us to believe that a paleolithic subculture lasted in England, living semi-naked in the bushes, until nearly the beginning of the Reformation at least, and possibly until the current day. Of course late Inquistorial confessions were consistent; they were practically dictated to the torture victim. A much better account of the relationship of paganism to Christianity before and during England's post-pagan period is Jessi Weston's classic "From Ritual to Romance". Its conclusions were derived from decades of intense study of the Grail mythology and its anthropological, mythological, and social context.

As a parting note on the Reformation, we may note the peculiar phenomenon of court astrologers and alchemists and their ilk, the most notable examples being the sorcerer John Dee and the seer Edward Kelley under Elizabeth. These were the inheritors of Paracelsus and the other alchemists and Christian medicine doctors, using pagan symbols and methods with a veil of Christian symbolism. Kelley stopped the work of Dee and Kelley under unknown circumstances; he is said to have been told by the angels to form a group sex arrangement with Dee and his wife, which they supposedly did for a while; in another version, Kelley was driven from the work by a prophecy of a new age dawning, which was heresy.

So, on to the Enlightenment of the seventeenth century. This was more humanistic than religious, though humanism is a religion on alternate Tuesdays; it all depends which of the many reasonable definitions you use. In any case, the seventeenth centuries saw the first applications of the renewed Greek humanism that originated in the Renaissance. The counter-Christian current was running stronger; more and more, people were beginning to demand equal treatment for all, and freedom from the rigid boundaries of thought and expression imposed on them by governments and churches alike. This humanism has colored most "opposition" religious movements in America since this time, much for the better in my opinion. This is because principles of respect for the individual were put into the American system of government (as an afterthought - the humanistic heyday had ended in the 1780's in America, and the new would-be ruling class had to be forcibly reminded), and the governmental structure was such that it was able to make progress in its understanding of freedom.

Things did not work out quite so well in France's humanistic revolution, largely due to Robespierre, the atheistic moral grandfather of Stalin and Pol Pot. He interpreted

opposition to monarchy as punishing high birth with low death, and then set out ruthlessly to purge opposition and deviation. Soon monarchy was re-established in France.

The nineteenth century was a period of resurgence of paganism. The neo-classical movement was explicitly devoted to rediscovering the virtues of the highly pagan societies Rome and Greece. This movement was to be by far the dominant force of the century. Humanism was further applied to the institution of slavery, resulting in war and social upheaval. The Prometheans such as Blake, Shelley, Byron, and so forth were widely considered to be among the greatest luminaries of the period.

The method of science and its results made available much more information on religions of the East and of less civilized cultures. Contact between religiously different but politically equal forces invariably leads to mutual excuses for the other, largely to help keep trade going, but also as a result of time spent in foreign climes observing the practice of religion. This creates, although not in great numbers at first, a different attitude toward religions than the dogmatic denial of all other religions possible only under a large and self-sufficient monolithic theocracy. Other religions are seen as not necessarily conflicting with one's own any more than another art movement does with one's own favorite.

There was a more open resurgence of sorcery in less overtly Christian forms, particularly in the last half of the century. This attracted many notable adherents, and from the publication of "The Magus" by Barrett in 1801, the movement created a magical library in modern English which is still widely read and used. It used the work of Renaissance magicians, court sorcerors, Kabalists, and so forth, and attempted to apply the psychological principles of the day in various original fudgings. There was also the Theosophical movement, largely discredited by Blavatsky's proven cheating on tests of psychic powers, and rather more like spiritualism with Eastern allusions than any Eastern religion.

The psychical movement, which changed its name to parapsychology, grew out of spiritualism, which grew out of mesmerism, which was apparently fairly original and totally ludicrous, but did yield the secret of hypnotism. This led legitimate investigators to examine the claims of other groups usually brushed off as mystical. The early Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1882 and led by prominent scientists such as the American psychologist William James, was formed "first, to carry on systematic experimentation with hypnotic subjects, mediums, clairvoyants, and others; and, secondly, to collect evidence concerning apparitions, haunted houses, and similar phenomena which are incidentally reported, but which, from their fugitive nature, admit of no deliberate control."

It is to be noted that there is still, a century later, no replicable experiment to demonstrate the existence of anything but hypnotic subjects in this list. It is also worth noting that while general models of the layout of the psyche continue to be employed in psychotherapy, there is still no generally agreed upon experimental methodology to

falsify features of these models. Finally, it should be noted that the ritual magic methods employed by many pagans, in other times as well as today, still have not been placed under real scientific scrutiny to determine whether or not they produce any physically measurable effects. (My feeling is that such effects are limited in scope to participants in the rituals and people who have knowledge of their occurrence, whether such knowledge is true or false.)

Various factions of magicians struggled to survive in the early half of the twentieth century, against an increasingly Christian atheist culture; that is, a materialistic populace concerned almost exclusively with day-to-day life and easy entertainment, but still paying occasional lip service to Christianity and suspicious of all other religions. Most of the inheritors of nineteenth-century magical paganism were hopelessly fragmented and dogmatized, incapable of working together and resolving their differences.

In the late forties, Gerald Gardner began publishing books on witchcraft. Gardner was a known associate of Aleister Crowley's and his rituals use a lot of symbolism drawn from Crowley, but only a few actual references to Crowley. He is also reported to have associated with Theosophist groups. Crowley was one of the chief inheritors of the jumble left at the end of the nineteenth century, as well as a traveller and student in Eastern lands. In any case, Gardner (after Crowley) called for yet another neo-classicism, following the pattern of all the other resurgences of Graeco-Roman paganism, but more explicitly religious.

The laudable looseness of Gardner's system was more attractive to magically inclined people than the Golden Dawn and Theosophy splinters remaining. It freed them to create on their own, and they went at it with a vengeance. One reason for the greater effective freedom was that Gardner was not as hard an act to follow as many of the Golden Dawn leaders. He was soon gone beyond by his students, many of whom went off to form their own Gardnerian splinters and mythological histories of their origin.

Another reason was the less formidable Gardnerian system of initiation. Most magical groups had complex multi-layered spiritual hierarchies. These were supposed to represent psychological fact, but little in the way of acceptable empirical observation was used to correct these schemes, mostly drawn from loose interpretations of the Kabala, and they can't be said to have really compelling inter-individual force. These were replaced by a simple hierarchy of three grades. This was the high-level structure of the Golden Dawn, and of a number of Masonic groups, which divided their degrees into categories. The third grade was no longer reserved for secret chiefs who almost certainly never existed or for mythological prophets, and the initiations had a more joyful and celebratory character, rather than a system of awful psychological ordeals. (I feel that the emphasis on ordeals and spiritual hierarchy was a product of Christian influence, with the triumph of martyrdom as a supreme spiritual experience and the hierarchic nature of the Church, and that a simpler formula based on Thelemic growth, like the dominant neo-pagan formula, rather than Christian death/rebirth is more appropriate.)

A common claim among neo-pagans is that paganism was suddenly revealed to the world in the fifties after centuries of hiding. This is demonstrably false; all that is needed is a bit of history, textual analysis, and symbolic comparison to see how close neo-paganism (as the movement came to be known in the sixties) is to its known historical antecedents. But mythological histories are themselves traditional in world religions. While it is important to know the real history of a religion, this does not invalidate the possible value of mythological tales of the origin, because these serve as fictional statements of intent, often incorporating powerful symbolism. They have literary value in this respect; and literary or other artistic value is a type of spiritual value.

Modern religious paganism has made a unique contribution. No eclectic/pagan movement of the historical past has brought the contributions of paleolithic shamanism into the fold as well as has neo-paganism. In large part this is due to a rise in knowledge of such religions at the same time as the rise of neo-paganism. This is an extremely valuable contribution; in shamanism lies the roots of all human religion. A coven meeting still resembles a Golden Dawn lodge considerably more than it does a shamanistic lodge, despite the valuable addition of techniques originating in shamanism.

This has been a necessarily brief and incomplete account. I have not mentioned Rabelais, the Rosicrucians, the decadent poets, Nietzsche, de Sade, Levi, Gurdjieff, James, Augustine, Shakespeare, Masonry, Paine, American utopian communities, Jung, Merlin, art and spirit, or Gnosticism, all of which are vital elements of the story; I have given short shrift to the psychical movement and its influence on nineteenth and twentieth century paganism; and I have neglected many other relevant topics. But I hope this will suffice as a brief overview of the pagan history preceding neo-paganism.
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On the Lesser Banishing

Ritual of the Pentagram

by Tim Maroney (1984)

The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram (LBR) is one of the chief rituals of Western Magick. It has been with us at least since the Golden Dawn of the nineteenth century, and it has penetrated into all the many Golden Dawn spinoffs, including Neo-Paganism. Yet there is still no widely available, clear instruction. The directions of the magical orders are mere mnemonics for those who are assumed to have personal instructors. To formulate my personal approach to the ritual, to aid any others who may be considering practicing the LBR, and to satisfy the idle curiosity of any gawking onlookers, I have put together this short discussion of the ritual and its symbolism and performance.

A. Intent of the Ritual

Ritual is a form of moving meditation and the LBR is a tool to facilitate meditation. The real action of a magick ritual takes place in the mind, in my view, but not all ritualists

would agree. Many would say that the effect of the LBR is to create a fortified and cleansed area on the astral plane, which they think is as real as Hoboken, if not more so. It doesn't really matter in practice as the only effect we know is the one in our perceptions.

The experience of a proper LBR is pleasurable and soothing, yet energizing and empowering. One is made at home in the mystical realm, protected from lurkers and phantasms by strongly imagined wards. This solace from mundane experience is a precondition for more serious works of meditation or ritual, but it can also form a healthy part of the life of the mind by itself.

B. The Ritual

I'll just reprint the description of the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram from Liber O, a publication of the occult order A.∴ A.∴.

i.

Touching the forehead say Ateh (Unto Thee),

ii.

Touching the breast say Malkuth (The Kingdom),

iii.

Touching the right shoulder, say ve-Geburah (and the Power),

iv.

Touching the left shoulder, say ve-Gedulah (and the Glory),

v.

Clasping the hands upon the breast, say le-Olahm, Amen (To the Ages, Amen).

vi.

Turning to the East, make a pentagram (that of Earth) with the proper weapon (usually the Wand). Say (i.e. vibrate) IHVH.

vii.

Turning to the South, the same, but say ADNI.

viii.

Turning to the West, the same, but say AHIH.

ix.

Turning to the North, the same, but say AGLA.

[Pronounce: Ye-ho-wau, Adonai, Eheieh, Agla.]

x.

Extending the arms in the form of a cross say,

xi.

Before me Raphael;

xii.

Behind me Gabriel;

xiii.

On my right hand Michael;

xiv.

On my left hand Auriel;

xv.

For about me flames the Pentagram,

xvi.

And in the Column stands the six-rayed Star.

xvii-xxi.

Repeat (i) to (v), the "Qabalistic Cross."

C. Preliminary Acts

There are a number of necessary preconditions in any cleansing ritual. Not the least important are the physical conditions.

It's not a good idea to just launch into this thing from a standing start. You should start

by evacuating any bodily wastes. Heavy food in the digestive tract is bound to interfere, so don't pig out right before practice. If your nose is clogged, clear it. (There are some gross yogic techniques for doing this if necessary.) Remove any serious muscle tensions; I do this in two ways, by stretching and by sitting quietly for a few minutes. If you do hatha yoga, this would be a good time to sit in a pose like vajrasana or lotus.

It's best to bathe or shower first, and put on special clothes worn only during ritual, but those are optional considerations.

It's very useful to have a room in your home that is either set aside for ritual, or can be transformed into a suitable room readily. In 1984, I shared my ritual room with my lover, who uses it for typing. This was a fortunate arrangement, since we both want the room to be simple, uncluttered, and non-distracting, and all I had to do is hide the typewriter and throw a cloth over the desk. If you can't arrange something like that, make sure you at least have enough free floor space in the center of the room you're using for freedom of movement.

D. Ritual Gestures

You should refer to the ritual above while reading this section.

The "Qabalistic Cross"

The "Qabalistic Cross" (steps i-v) is a self-consecration. The magician becomes a sanctified instrument for the execution of the rest of the ritual. This can't be an empty exercise; linger on each phrase for as long as it takes to form some strong, albeit brief concentration on the meaning.

Think of the short prayer of the Qabalistic Cross as a baptism, using light rather than water. Imagine that your body has "centers" which you are bringing to life by anointing them with your hand. There are five such "centers". At the end of the Cross, remain for a moment in that posture, upright, hands clasped, feeling the Cross within yourself, yourself as the Cross. This should bring on a purified perception of the body.

The Cross addresses a second person, a "thee". Who is this mysterious person? "Thee" is your own "higher self", by some readings. If you prefer monotheistic symbolism, read "God[dess]" for "thee". Even for monotheists, the consecration is of yourself, although "by the power of God". The two symbolisms can be mapped easily onto each other; it's an issue of God within or God without.

The "vanilla" version of the Cross is not what most Thelemites use. Instead, go "Atoh" (touch brow), "Aiwass" (touch breast), "Malkuth" (touch genitals), and then the arms as normal. "Aiwass who?" That's a name Crowley's Holy Guardian Angel called itself by. If you attain to the Knowledge and Conversation of your Holy Guardian Angel (as it is so quaintly called), use its name instead of Aiwass. Don't expect this attainment to happen tomorrow or next week; in the Golden Dawn and Thelema, it's a major attainment, the center of the path. But then, you're the only real judge of it.

The Banishing Pentagram of Earth

This pentagram is a five pointed star, point up. To draw it, start from the lower left-hand corner (your left), go up to the top point, and continue from there. The index finger is a common tool for drawing the stars; it's a very natural way of writing symbols in the air. A good wand can be hard to find.

Note that you do not draw the stars at the end of your finger, but project them outwards as if your finger was a laser, with the stars being drawn by the beam onto an outlying vertical plane - perhaps a few inches short of the wall, or on the wall, or just in a convenient expanse of air. Over time I've come to draw them at the outermost reaches of space, at the thrones of the Guardians of the Watchtowers at the four quarters of the earth, in the flat-earth Christian cosmology employed by the Renaissance magicians Dee and Kelley. This approach sanctifies the entire earth rather than just the room.

Drawing the pentagram will be easy or hard for you, depending on whether you are good at visualization. I'm not, so it's hard. (I'm getting better with practice, though.) Ideally, the stars should be of flame, drawn in the air, but early on a faint outline is no cause to complain. It's not a good idea to use drugs to increase your visualization abilities on a routine basis. If you are experienced with drugs, it may be useful to employ them for an LBR every once in a while just to show you what it could be like.

The pentagram can be a potent symbol. Recall Leonardo's image of the microcosm, i.e., the individual human. The central pentagon represents the torso, the top point the head, the other four points the limbs.

For a religious humanist, the individually named pentagrams are essentially aspects of the higher self, given life/breath by the vibrations of the god-names. For a theist, the pentagrams are anthropomorphic manifestations of deity, summoned by the vibration of god-names.

The Vibration of God-Names

In the LBR, the vibration of the god-names "charges" or "enlivens" the pentagrams in the air. This is difficult to describe, but easy to recognize. There is a feeling of presence in one of these charged warding images - though not necessarily a feeling of true externality or separate intelligence.

We are told to "vibrate" the names. The description and illustration of the "vibration" given in Liber O have been known to mislead people into hilarious postures. What the picture most resembles is the skulking monster from the movie The Mummy. To the modern eye, it is remarkable how truly unclear a photograph can be.

I didn't learn how to vibrate a god-name until I signed up with yet another occult order and was taught it in person. I wouldn't wish membership in an occult fraternity on anyone, so here is a description which I hope will be adequate in print.

Vibration phase i - The Sign of the Enterer (1-4)

1. Stand upright. Blow all the air out of your lungs. Hold your arms straight out at your sides.

2a. Close your eyes and inhale nasally, imagining that the breath is the name. The exact nature of this imagination differs from person to person. Thus, you imagine yourself inhaling the name into your lungs.

2b. As you inhale, sweep your forearms smoothly and deliberately up so that your fists rest on your temples.

3. Imagine the breath moving down through your torso slowly, and through your pelvis, your legs, and finally to the soles of your feet. (Don't do this so slowly that you are hurting for air when the name reaches your feet!)

4a. The instant the inhaled vibrational name hits the soles of your feet, imagine it rushing back up and out.

4b. Simultaneously, throw yourself forward, thrusting your left foot forward about twelve inches (or thirty centimeters) and catching yourself on it. Your hands shoot forward, together, like a diver or like Superman taking flight. You bend forward at the waist so that your torso winds up parallel to the floor.

4c. The air in your lungs should be blown out through your nose at the same time, but imagine the name shooting out straight ahead.

Steps 3-4 are known as the Sign of the Enterer, or of Horus. This symbolizes powerful active energy. The Enterer should be something of a "rush". The vibrational name is projected outwards into more tangible manifestation - in this case, in the pentagrams of the LBR, which are charged by the force of the projected god-names.

Vibration phase ii - The Sign of Silence (5)

5. Finally, withdraw into a standing position, left arm hanging at your side, right forefinger on lips, left foot pointing ninety degrees out from the body.

Step 5 is called the Sign of Silence, or of Harpocrates. This Egyptian god was mistakenly believed (at the turn of the century) to pertain to silence, because his finger or thumb was touching his lips. This gesture is now believed to be a symbol of childhood; this correction appears in the World card of Crowley's Book of Thoth Tarot deck. Harpocrates was the god of the Sun at dawn, and so symbolizes wonder, beauty, potential, growth. So, step 5 may be done in this academically corrected light instead.

However, the "hush" gesture of the Golden Dawn Sign of Silence is adequate for the modern occultist, even if deprived of A Divine Identification. It is a common gesture, at least in European/American culture, meaning silence. Silence balances the ultra-active Sign of the Enterer better than does the more scholarly positive/active "Sign of Harpocrates the Rising Sun", and silence is surely no alien concept to mystics.

You'll note that "Ye-ho-wau" is given as the pronunciation of YHWH. Modern scholarship has a different take on the pronunciation of the Big Guy's name. I use "Yahweh" rather than the "Ye-ho-wau" of Liber O because that's what the Catholic priests of my youth taught me to say, and I've never been able to shake it off. Use whatever pronunciation you prefer, or a different name altogether.

The Invocation

The pentagrams are given form by the drawing, life by the vibration, identity by the four-part prayer of steps (x) to (xiv). Some people do very elaborate visualizations of angelic guardians on each of (xi) to (xiv). Because of my tragic personal deficiencies, I am content with strong feelings of presence, identity, and divinity in each of the four directions.

A horizontal cross is built up step by step as you say, "Before me Raphael", etc, with you at the center; and the position of your arms forms a vertical cross, a renewal of the Qabalistic Cross from the start of the ritual. You may feel a peculiar rising and expansion when both of these crosses are formulated. One has become the center of the geometry of the space, and it is like a world in itself, cut adrift from the mundane currents of everyday experience.

Steps (xv) and (xvi) are when the real banishing takes place, during "For about me flames the pentagram, and in the column stands the six-rayed star." A great pulse of force is emitted during these steps, imposing the personal will on the space and clearing it of all hostile influences.

After this is done, the invoked "archangels" maintain the banishing effect, guarding in all four directions. Of course this talk of angels is nonsense - the importance lies in the psychological effect. Whether there "really is" an archangel standing there keeping out inimical spirits is not important. The "feeling of cleanliness" is what matters.

Concluding Cross

The final Qabalistic Cross is an affirmation of the completeness and symmetry of the ritual, and also a new self-consecration. This is more efficacious than the previous Cross because it is done in a banished environment.

E. Comments on the Ritual

With practice, you will no doubt come up with your own style of performance, and your own different symbolism for ritual acts. Different people do rituals as differently as actors play parts, even though the lines and motions may be fundamentally the same. (The alternative is an authoritarian, dogmatic horror which is alien to the deep occult understanding of religion, but is still common in magical groups.) Slavish imitation will get you nowhere in Magick - except, perhaps, to a high spiritual degree in some parochial in-group!

The Christianity - or at least angelic monotheism - of the ritual symbolism may give

pause to some. Many of us involved in occultism have negative feelings about Christianity. These may be somewhat justified, but there are a few saving graces here.

First, as with any ritual, you should feel free to make it yours, to mess around with it. If you don't start to at least play with the styles of a ritual after a while, you are probably not doing it very well. It is perfectly legitimate to substitute cognate symbols at any time. However, the saying in the martial arts is that one first learns another's style, and after mastering it, moves on to create one's own. For a beginner, it will be easiest simply to use an existing ritual form in order to explore the meaning of a banishing ritual.

Given experience with the ritual, which transcends any mere set of symbols, one may devise a form more in keeping with the emergence of one's personal style. For instance, Neo-Pagans use various highly reified forms of the same basic ritual in many of their traditions, but with non-Christian deities, spirits, and heroes at the quarters. Aleister Crowley wrote a new version, the Star Ruby, which used the names of deities and officers from his "Thelemic" system rather than monotheist gods and angels.

In any case, of those people who abhor Christianity, how many have looked at some of the practices of historical pagans in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas? No religion should ever be "accepted" by an occultist. When using any religion's symbolism, the adept should cut to its sacred poetical core, and discard the political dross. By this standard, Christianity looks hardly better or worse than any other religion. Without this selection process, and by factoring in historical excesses and power plays, almost all known religions look as bad as Christianity. In other words, those who happily use Norse gods, Arthurian heroes, Taoist immortals, Voudoun loas, or what have you in rituals, but never touch a Christian angel, are guilty of the same narrowness they impart to the Christians.

Having performed the banishing ritual, one is now ready to do a formal invocation, an evocation, a meditation, or whatever the overall spiritual purpose may be. The LBR is a preliminary ceremony, although it has a beneficial effect in itself. It can profitably be done as a stand-alone ritual, but you should move on. Its mastery is a first step to adepthood.

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Even If I Did Believe...

by Tim Maroney (1984)

Introduction

I am not a Christian. In my discussions of this fact with Christians, I have repeatedly run into a major misunderstanding. The Christians assume that if I believed the Bible were true, I would become a Christian; that is, they believe that my reason for not being a Christian is that I don't believe in their god. This is not the case. In this essay, I will explain more clearly why I am not a Christian. The essay is not meant as an attack on Christianity, just as a statement of personal belief.

One disclaimer: The thesis of this essay is that even if a God as described in the Bible does exist, he is not fit for worship. Consequently, I speak sometimes as if I did believe the Bible, when in fact I do not.

If I had undeniable proof of the existence of Yahweh, aka Jehovah, aka Adonai, aka El Shaddai, aka Yahweh Elohim, the father of Jesus and the ancient leader of the Semitic peoples, I still would not worship the bastard. If an angel appeared to me and removed my appendectomy scar so I could never deny the reality of divine power, I still would not be a Christian. My primary reason for not being a Christian has nothing to do with my lack of belief in their god. My primary reason is that the Bible is a disgusting book describing the behavior of a god without the morality of the average high school student.

That God does what he wants, when he wants, without even an attempt at self-justification, and all for what reason? According to Paul, all for his own greater glory. For his own glory he condemns billions to eternal torment, drowns millions of innocent beasts and thousands of children, orders the slaughter of entire cities down to the last man, woman, and child, creates a race that he knows is flawed and will hurt itself, refuses to deal with any other god on a friendly basis, rains doom on those who dare to try to be as knowledgeable as he is, and so on.

Hell

Jesus preaching love in no way atones for Yahweh's many hideous crimes; lest we forget, it was at the time of Jesus that he created Hell. This cruellest of all concentration camps (certainly far worse than the ones created by the Nazis) was at no time mentioned in the Old Testament, and the wrathful and threatening god of the Old Testament would hardly have omitted any chance to terrify his worshippers.

(Incidentally, the "Sheol" of the Old Testament is simply a generic term for the afterlife; neither modern scholarship nor Judaic tradition equates it with Hell.)

I have heard some Christians who believe that there is no everburning Hell in their religion, that the "lake of fire" is purely destructive, that sinners will be annihilated rather than tortured after the Last Judgment. Sometimes, they claim that medieval Catholics created that "myth", and that they would revile any god who made this concentration camp.

Well, get ready to start reviling then. The myth of Hell was not created in the Middle Ages. It is explicitly stated in a set of books called the Synoptic Gospels, you know, the ones by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Since some people don't seem to be very familiar with these books, usually considered the cornerstone of Christianity, I'll fill them in.

In Matt. 18:34-35, Jesus finishes up a parable about an unforgiving debtor with: "And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart." Not clean killing - you will be handed over to the torturers. In the

parable of the wedding feast, Matthew 22:1-14, Jesus concludes with "Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.'" The king didn't say, "Execute him", but bind him and throw him into a painful place. This is echoed in Mat. 24:51, in almost the same words, and again in Mat. 25:30, again with similar words. Finally (for Matthew), we have Mat. 25:41-46, on the Last Judgment. "Next he will say to those on his left hand, 'Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels... And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life.'"

My point is proven, so I won't bore you with the quotes from Mark and Luke; however, check out Mark 9:43, Mark 9:48-49, Luke 13:27- 28, and Luke 16:23-26 if you still doubt. Why would Jesus have so frequently mentioned the existence of an afterlife of torment if that was misleading his followers? And why did he never imply the existence of a forthcoming destruction of the unfaithful?

Among the Christians who accept the reality of Hell, another rationalization is quite popular. This holds that Hell is in some sense voluntary, and chosen by its inmates. It's an interesting idea, and certainly one of the more interesting aspects of Dante's "Inferno" is the way the conditions of the damned reflect conditions created in life by their sins. I agree completely that the man who commits murder must live ever in fear of attack, that the thief will never feel secure in his property, that the liar can trust no one, and so on. By their offenses they create an unpleasant life for themselves.

However, you don't have to hurt anyone to get into Hell. All it takes, according to Scripture, is knowing about Jesus and not accepting him as Savior. It doesn't matter how virtuous you are, how much good you do, how happy an environment you create for yourself and others. Given this, the voluntary entry argument doesn't make sense. The same argument could be used to justify the sending of Aryan opponents of Nazism to concentration camps: they voluntarily chose not to give homage to Hitler, so they chose to be interred. Why should we blame the Nazis for the inmates' choice? Why should we blame Yahweh for the choice of the damned?

Genocide

You hear a lot from Christians about Yahweh's "infinite compassion and mercy". Tell it to the Midianites. Numbers 31 is a classic example of wholesale slaughter and rape under the direction of Yahweh. A sample of this tale: "They waged the campaign against Midian, as Yahweh had ordered Moses, and they put every male to death.... The sons of Israel took the Midianite women captive with their young children, and plundered all their cattle, all their flocks and all their goods. They set fire to the towns where they lived and all their encampments.... Moses was enraged with the commanders of the army ... who had come back from this military expedition. He said, 'Why have you spared the life of all the women? ... So kill all the male children. Kill also all the women who have slept with a man. Spare the lives only of the young girls who have not slept with a man, and take them for yourselves.'" Yes, friends, this is infinite mercy and compassion for you. I particularly like the way that Moses got upset with them for sparing women and male

children, but allowed the young girls to be kept for later raping. If only humans could keep to such lofty standards without the necessity of divine revelation.

This wasn't the first time the Hebrews harassed the Midianites (although it was obviously the last...) Earlier, in Chapter 25 to be precise, Israel settled in Midian. Rather than toss the Hebrews out on their ear from this land of limited resources, the Midianites - well, I'll let the author of Numbers tell it: "The [Hebrews] gave themselves over to debauchery with the daughters of Moab. These invited them to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down before their gods. With Israel thus committed to the Baal of Peor, the anger of Yahweh blazed out against them. Yahweh said to Moses: 'Take all the leaders of the people. Impale them for Yahweh, here in the sun; then the burning anger of Yahweh will turn away from Israel.' Moses said to the judges in Israel, 'Every one of you must put to death those of his people who have committed themselves to the Baal of Peor.'"

Now that is written in a rather negatively-connotated fashion. Look at what actually happened: Israel arrived in Midian. The Midianites welcomed them like kinfolk. They let them date their daughters; they invited them to come to Church. Right neighbourghly reception, if you ask me. Some of the Hebrews, no doubt impressed by the friendly ways of these people, took up the local customs of their own free will. So what does Moses do? He puts spears through them and lets them rot in the sun. Who's the bad guy here? I'd say it's pretty obvious. Neither apostacy or fornication deserve the death penalty - or do you think we should start frying unwed mothers and those who leave their religion, by Federal law?

Right on the heels of this comes a plague. This is blamed by the Hebrews on one Zimri, who had the incredible gall to actually marry a Midianite woman! Fortunately, a zealous son of Israel speared them both right through the genitals, and the plague went away. Now we moderns know that disease just doesn't work that way, but a more important objection concerns a point of Biblical trivia. Of what nationality was Zipporah, the wife of Moses? You have five seconds ... That's right, she was a Midianite! But for some reason Moses' genitals were allowed to remain intact. This makes marriage to a Midianite seem like less than a capital offense.

I don't think the firstborn in Egypt during the captivity would have agreed with the verdict of compassion and mercy (Ex. 11:5,12:29). Yahweh could have teleported the Jews out of captivity without bloodshed, or put the Egyptians to sleep while they left, but no. That wouldn't be gory and exciting enough for him. Now rivers of blood, killing innocent children: there's something you can really sink your teeth into.

It was due to Yahweh's hardening of Pharoah's heart in the first place that made the later cruelties necessary. And why? Yahweh explains to Moses in Ex. 11:9, "Pharoah will not listen to you; so that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt." Wonderful. All those children and adults tortured and killed, for the same reason that would lead one of us today to set off fireworks. This is immorality, pure and simple.

The entire book of Joshua is a long sequence of atrocities. I have not given all these quotes for space reasons - I urge you to look them up for yourself. If you are not shocked, then your moral standards must be low indeed.

Of course, you will sometimes hear rationalizations of this slaughter. There are two major forms: the corruption argument and the mercy argument. The former says that those slaughtered were evil and deserving of their fate; the latter says that since they were religiously incorrect, it was a mercy to terminate their existence.

The corruption argument simply does not hold up. The people slaughtered in the Old Testament were almost uniformly blameless (with a few exceptions, of course - for instance, the Sodomites violated the conventions of hospitality.) Usually, no justification is offered beyond the fact that since they were of another tribe, it was OK to kill them. And it goes without saying that the hordes of slaughtered children were innocent.

As to the mercy argument: They shoot horses, don't they? However, people are not animals to be destroyed against their will in the name of mercy. If I don't claim to be suffering, and don't ask to die, neither you nor any god has the right to decide that you know better. If a person tried to do this to me, I would shoot him; if a god tried, well, the only weapon I would have would be withholding my worship.

Neglect

Most of us, given omnipotence, would be able to do a far better job than Yahweh. What would you do if given omnipotence? If your answer is anything other than "abolish world hunger", there's something more than a little skewed in your perception of mankind. There is no question that this is the greatest evil in the world today. The second thing would be to abolish disease, right? This doesn't take "infinite mercy", just normal compassion and a bit of common sense. God's supposedly infinite mercy is apparently the same thing as no mercy at all.

What makes this particularly unforgivable is that even Jesus's own standards demand feeding of the poor. See Matthew 25:35, in which it is stated that the blessed feed the hungry, and that the damned do not. Yahweh is held blameless, though, for not feeding them. Does the old saw about "practicing what you preach" not apply to Yahweh? Is his hypocrisy not a sin?

Usually, when I bring this up in a discussion, someone says, "No; it is the evil of men that is to blame; they have lots of money and keep it to themselves rather than feeding the poor." This argument uses a double standard. Men are held guilty for not feeding the poor, while Yahweh is held innocent for doing exactly the same. In fact, it would be far easier for Yahweh to feed all the poor than for any man to feed even one! Men are certainly not blameless here, but it is Yahweh who is the true villain.

One popular rationalization of this is that for Yahweh to feed all the hungry would somehow (and it is never explained how) make it more difficult for people to get into Heaven. Sure, and another reason is that it would make the quality of newspapers

worse, right? You can't just say that two things are connected when there is no apparent or explained link between them! (Well, you can, but you'd be making a fool of yourself.)

Another popular rationalization is that life without "challenges" would be boring and dehumanizing, so Yahweh does not remove them. The fallacy here is grouping all challenges together. I personally lead a very challenging and satisfying life, but I have not lately had to flee any volcanos or earthquakes, go without food for a week, or suffer the ravages of some disease. I would be quite happy, in fact, if I never do have to face such challenges as those. There is plenty of room for amelioration of the human condition without making it dull. Another objection here is that the same people who like this rationalization usually believe that they will enter a world that is perfect and without challenge after death, but they don't seem particularly put off by it

Other Gods

Suppose you were a god and there were other gods. What would you do? What I would try to do is the same thing I do as a person among other people - try to make friends or at least truce with as many of them as possible. The jealous Judeo-Christian god does the opposite.

Some people feel that Yahweh is the only god, and therefore cannot be faulted for not having friendly relations with other gods. This idea is a fairly modern invention: that not only is he the best god, but the only one. Yahweh is repeatedly referred to as "our God" in the Pentateuch, and there is no implication until Isaiah that he is the only real one. Also, try Deut. 5:7-9. It is psychotic to be jealous of nonexistent beings. The statement "You shall have no gods except me" clearly implies that the contrary is possible. However, I am willing to grant that there are no other gods for the sake of argument.

Suppose you were an omnipotent god and there were no other gods. What would you do? Perform a continual sequence of verifiable miracles; after all, this doesn't require any effort, and keeps people from delusion. No such luck in the case of Jehovah. He demands absolute fidelity without any demonstration of his existence, beyond some visionary manifestations of the sort that you can get from any religion.

Christians commonly rationalize this in one of two ways. First, they claim that there is a virtue in believing something without proof; that is, faith in itself is held to be a virtue, and Yahweh doesn't want to remove our opportunity to indulge in it. All I can say to this is that I do not consider faith to be a virtue - I consider it to be a sign of intellectual weakness, and a significant barrier to scientific and other progress.

There is no virtue in accepting a thing on faith, since it may well be false, and it is clearly not virtuous to believe the false. Given that one has faith, how does one decide whether to put it in Christianity instead of Hinduism? There is no way; you just have to cross your fingers and take the plunge. Whichever choice you take, you will hear voices in your head, see divine manifestations, and so on, so even once the plunge is taken there is no way to know you are correct.

It has also not escaped my attention that many of the same people who prattle about the virtues of faith like to talk about "proofs" of various things in their religion, such as the resurrection of Jesus. Which is it? Do you have faith, or do you have proof?

Second, there is the rationalization that scientific discovery would become impossible if a continual stream of verifiable miracles were performed. This argument denies the omnipotence of Yahweh. If he can do anything, he can perform a sequence of miracles in such a way as to convince everyone of his existence and not interfere with scientific discovery at all. The only things he can't do are logical absurdities such as making $2+2=5$.

The point to remember here is that if we don't believe in him, we go to Hell, and this is a greater evil than a lack of the "virtue" of faith or a stunting of science, or anything else conceivable. If Yahweh is concerned about the good, he will do what he can to keep us from Hell, and withholding vital information from us is the exact opposite of this.

Other Charges

The charge against Yahweh of infecting us with disease is particularly strong. God made these micro-organisms, and made us subject to them. If I made a bunch of plague germs and set them loose, you would rightly hold me accountable. Since (according to Genesis) all life and thus all disease comes from Yahweh, I hold him similarly accountable.

A similar consideration arises with respect to the common Christian conception of Satan. This being was created and unleashed by God, who knew exactly what he would do: that is, spend his entire existence wreaking havoc and leading people into criminal activities. Suppose I were to build an evil robot that I knew would go around killing people. Whose fault would it be if I let it loose, mine or the robot's? Whose fault is devilry in the world, the puppet Satan or the being that deliberately created Satan's evil?

Yahweh deliberately acts to restrict man's capability for understanding. I have heard the claim that Yahweh does not restrict us from learning, that he encourages us to learn all we can. Tell it to the workers at the Tower of Babel. In case your memory fails you here, Gen. 11:6-7 says, "'So they are all a single people with a single language!' said Yahweh. 'This is but the start of their undertakings! There will be nothing too hard for them to do. [Horrors! - tim] Come, let us go down and confuse their language on the spot so that they can no longer understand one another.'"

Human Judgment

One of the criticisms most frequently levelled at me when presenting these arguments has been that I have no right to judge God. In the universe model of many Christians, God is the definition of good. All morality proceeds downwards from him, so it makes no sense to apply moral standards to him. From the perspective of man, trying to determine which of the various conflicting belief systems he should abide by, this argument makes no sense.

Assume that there is some religion of an evil god; we'll call this god Satan for convenience. It is clear that adherents of the religion of Satan would see him not as evil, but as good. Someone who is not a member of the religion of Satan might say, "But your god has ordered the slaughter of innocents! How, then, can you say that he is good?" The reply of one of the Satanists is likely to be, "Satan is the source of good; he is good by definition; he is far above us humans; it is thus nonsensical for us to judge him." That's the only way to wriggle off the hook. Slaughtering innocents is obviously evil, so to save Satan he has to be taken outside the normal standards of good and evil.

Now suppose that the questioner of the previous paragraph is trying to decide which religion to join. He must try to evaluate the various religions available to him; in particular, he will try to avoid falling into the clutches of some religion that worships an evil god or evil spirit. However, no religion says "We are evil; shun us like the plague." All religions claim to be good. So he will have to use some standard to compare the various religions, and this standard has to be independent of any one religion. Otherwise, he couldn't even get started. All religions are best by their own standard.

What standard is available for this necessary comparison? None is really ideal. The best we can do is say that religion is best which causes evil acts in its worshippers least and in which apparently evil acts are not performed by the worshipped being(s). Here he uses the common standard for "evil": theft, murder, rape, terrorism, and so on are held to be evil. He uses this standard because there is none better, and because it is necessary to use some such standard to avoid becoming ensnared by a cult of evil.

If we allow exemptions to any religion, there is no reason not to allow the same exemption to all the others. If we let Yahweh get away with murder, we must let Kali kill as well. This leaves us right back where we started, so we can't make exemptions in any case.

The fact of the matter is that Yahweh and Jesus do not pass this test. There are murder, theft, rape, and terrorism all through their books. Sometimes Yahweh does it; sometimes people do it on Yahweh's orders; sometimes Jesus just sits around gloating on the fate of sinners in the afterlife. It's just not an acceptable religion when you hold it to a moral standard. Furthermore, this unacceptability is manifest in the history of the religion, which is one of holy wars, intolerance, purges, vicious infighting, and general immorality.

Feedback

Some of the responses I have heard to this essay in the past are shown below, with my answers. (Actually, most of the responses I've gotten have been personal attacks and sheer, unadorned sophistry; these are the cream.)

"You can't judge God by the same standards as man." In that case, why is it that I keep getting told that God is good? Are there two meanings of the word "good", one of which forbids murder, deliberate starvation, infecting people with disease, and so on, and

another which allows these things? I suggest that there is already a word for the second meaning. That word is "evil".

One particularly curious rationalization here is that "starvation and disease and all the other evils of the world come from breaking God's laws." Starvation comes from not having enough food. Disease comes from exposure to various nasty micro-organisms, and from genetic infirmities. If you can show me how these two things come from breaking God's laws, I will be greatly surprised. Perhaps at the root they are caused by Adam and Eve falling from grace, but you can't hold some starving infant in Namibia responsible for the actions of two long-dead people, any more than you can hold me responsible for the acts of Jack the Ripper. There just isn't sufficient connection to establish guilt.

"Everything God does is really good, even though we can't always see that it is." There is no possible amount of good that can counterbalance the deliberate, perpetual starvation of the human race. Maybe we Americans have it so good that we can't see this, but most of the people in the world are undernourished. Children are dying by the truckload, not for any sin, but just because there isn't enough food for them. If you could see these children, and you had food, you would give food to them. (Either that, or you are an unfeeling monster.) Not so with the omniscient god you worship. He sees their bellies bloat, sees them run out of nutrients and rot alive, sees their brains dying, and doesn't do a damn thing, despite the fact that he has an unlimited supply of food to give. Another example of his mercy.

Christians have been claiming that there will be wonderful events, that will more than make up for the abominable pain and suffering on Earth, for about two thousand years now. It is clear from the gospels that Jesus thought that it was about to happen shortly after his death. Before the Christians, the Jews and Zoroastrians were saying it. Yet the world still turns as it has, and there is still no reason to think of these claims as other than pipe-dreams to mollify the masses.

"You are fixating on evil and ignoring the good done by Yahweh." A few years ago, there was a man named John Wayne Gacy. He was a good neighbor, a friendly man; he liked to dress up as a clown and bring delight to children's faces. He also abducted, raped, and killed more than a dozen boys, and buried them in his basement. When the jury convicted him, were they failing to take his good side into account? The fact is that murder and rape outweigh any other good that can be done by a being, and proof of these acts is sufficient for conviction of the being, for deciding it is evil. Charles Manson was good to his girls; but that made no difference at his trial for the murder of Sharon Tate, nor should it have.

"Don't ask such questions." People who say this are cowering slaves, beneath my notice. They would as soon serve the devil as god in their blindness and faith. No amount of evidence could convince them that the devil was bad once they had decided to worship him; their basic assumption is that they are correct, so they are untouchable by any rationality.

Conclusion

In closing, let's see how Yahweh/Jesus stands up to his own standards. In Matthew 26:41-46, we hear the King, "Next he will say to those on his left hand, 'Go away from

me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink; I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, naked and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me.' ... And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life."

Yahweh does not feed the hungry; he does not give drink to those who thirst; he dispenses no clothes, and lets the faithful sicken and die. In the light of this, Yahweh himself is the worst of sinners; if there is no double standard, he will be at the head of that line into eternal punishment. He is guilty of almost every crime of which he accuses the damned.

I do not believe in the reality of Jehovah, except as a psychological phenomenon, but if I did believe I would not worship that horror. It could send me to the Hell it's made for those it dislikes, and if there were no other choice but worshipping it, I would walk in proudly.

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A Letter to Close

by Tim Maroney (1999)

(Originally published in the newsletter of Hodos Chameleonis Oasis in Sacramento, California.)

One of the many curious inheritances of the O.T.O. is Liber CI: An Open Letter to Those Who May Wish to Join the Order Enumerating the Duties and Privileges. It is a wide-ranging and ambitious scheme describing what the Order might some day become, but it presents itself as a description of the actual state of the O.T.O. In fact, it never was that, and because our understanding of the goals of the Order has matured, it never will be. Though the document says that it is meant to be read by prospective members to help them understand what they would be joining, it is misleading at best, and may even discourage some of the better potential initiates without some clarification.

The leadership's reverence for tradition has led it into a full endorsement of this document, although a more cautious appraisal is called for. For instance, in Equinox III:10 and on the official web site otohq.org, the Open Letter is introduced as follows:

These regulations first appeared in The Equinox III(1) (Detroit: Universal, 1919) and constitute our best and most comprehensive guidelines for Thelemic social intercourse. Certain provisions will need to be modified to take advantage of the U.S.A.'s comparatively enlightened tax-exemption statutes as applied to religious organizations -- a few are of dubious legality at this writing. Most of the principles outlined herein have long been observed in the U.S. O.T.O. In addition, Equinox III:10 says that:

This Intimation should be closely studied in conjunction with the Constitution, the Open Letter and other relevant papers published in this volume by those who are concerned with the future direction of the O.T.O., in the United States and abroad.

It is normal for the religious to conflate their ideal for themselves with the reality of their groups, and intelligent people know that they should take accounts of a religion by its members with a grain of salt. In this case, though, traditionalism has won out over idealism. The dream of Liber CI is one that few today would share without reservations.

To be sure, there is much in the letter that is pleasant and desirable; for instance, traditional Freemasonic obligations of charity to destitute members are reiterated, and members are promised hospitality while visiting distant locations. At its worst, though, the letter presents the O.T.O. as the one true way above all others, denies human rights to non-members, condemns marriage outside the group, demands that members proselytize, and presents strange and disturbing ideas on child-raising and financial matters. It never described the O.T.O. as it actually existed, and today does not describe where it is going. It is a document of mostly historical interest and should no longer be recommended to potential members as an accurate description of the system of the Order.

I am not a spokesperson for the Order, but I have long been associated with it (about nineteen years at this writing) and I have some knowledge of how it functions. Statements in this essay should not be considered authoritative statements of policy, but my personal observations.

THE OPENING

Let us look at how the letter describes itself. Crowley states his intent clearly enough up front, beginning with an address to his treasurer, George Macnie Cowie:

[S]ome persons who are worthy to join the O.T.O. consider the fees and subscriptions rather high. This is due to your failure to explain properly the great advantages offered by the Order.

This is a peculiar opening. If the letter were to be presented as an actual promise to prospective members, it would be a fraudulent promise. Even more strangely, the treasurer is blamed for not misleading people about the actual nature of the Order, and this accusation of failure is inscribed for all time at the head of an official document. Crowley's relationship with Cowie can be traced in his Confessions and in archival materials. He was prone to fits of temper and to blaming others for his own lack of fiscal savvy. Cowie bore the brunt of his attacks.

This mean-spirited opening by itself is probably enough to put off some potential members. It sets an unpleasant tone that continues throughout. It reminds us that what makes Crowley so interesting is that he was in many ways an obnoxious and immature man, and yet his mystical achievements were remarkable. It reminds us that he was a poor leader, that he did not understand groups very well, and that we study him rather than following or emulating him.

ONE TRUE WAY

The letter presents the O.T.O. as not only one beneficial organization, but as the one true way. Its most notorious passage is this:

Members of the Order are to regard those without its pale as possessing no rights of any kind, since they have not accepted the Law, and are therefore, as it were, troglodytes, survivals of a past civilisation, and to be treated accordingly. Kindness should be shown towards them, as towards any other animal, and every effort should be made to bring them into Freedom.

This is the stuff of cult-hunters' nightmares made flesh. The letter says that anyone who is not a member of the Order has no rights, and members are instructed that their duty is to treat non-members as having no rights. The leadership today should make clear to prospective members that they are not expected to become bigots. Indeed, we should be doing our best to discourage bigots from joining. I am glad to say that there are few places in the Order today where such intolerance would find itself welcome.

Even if we were Thelemic bigots, the passage is not well thought out. Suppose we were to grant that people who have not accepted Crowley's religious doctrine ("the Law of Thelema") are somehow defective. Should we think that anyone who is not a member of one particular group, the O.T.O., has not accepted that Law? There are many independent Thelemites, as well as members of other Thelemic groups who find the O.T.O. not to their liking. Are they troglodytes as well?

The idea that the Order is uniquely superior to other groups is repeated later on:

The Order teaches the only perfect and satisfactory system of philosophy, religion, and science, leading its members step by step to knowledge and power hardly even dreamed of by the profane. [Emphasis added.]

These passages underscore another contradiction of Crowley: he was a prophet of "Freedom" who had no respect for the rights of others. In his mind he was the divinely appointed benevolent despot of the new world-age. The only liberty worth having was the liberty of obeying him. Our ideas of freedom have advanced in the twentieth century, and people today who are attracted to the freedom promised by the Thelemic system may encounter some cognitive dissonance in engaging Crowley's authoritarian and intolerant ideals. In the minds of the current membership, more advanced ideas of freedom have won out, but respect for tradition has introduced unfortunate compromises and rationalizations. Instead we should have the courage to admit that in this case, tradition is simply wrong.

GO YE FORTH AND CONVERT

Given Crowley's belief in the unique superiority of the O.T.O., we should not be surprised to find the usual cultic concomitant -- an instruction to go forth, spread the word, and bring back converts. Members of the O.T.O. are ordered to proselytize, not only by opening all conversations with Thelemic slogans, but by passing out pamphlets and going on missionary journeys.

The Brethren shall be diligent in preaching the Law of Thelema. In all writings they shall be careful to use the prescribed greetings; likewise in speech, even with strangers. They shall be diligent in circulating all tracts, manifestos, and all other communications which the Order may from time to time give out for the instruction or emancipation of the profane.

He should also do all in his power to spread the Law, especially taking long journeys, when possible, to remote places, there to sow the seed of the Law.

Again, these instructions do not reflect modern consensus. They seem more appropriate to the Moonies than to us. In today's occult and pagan communities, we usually define ourselves by saying that we do not proselytize. We say that we are happy to let those whose interests coincide with ours join us of their own free will. Again the letter does not express a useful guideline for today, but an historical relic from an overzealous founder, and we could expect some of the better potential members to be repelled rather than attracted by it.

Every Brother is expected to use all his influence with persons in a superior station of life (so called) to induce them to join the Order. Royal personages, ministers of State, high officials in the Diplomatic, Naval, Military, and Civil Services are particularly to be sought after, for it is intended ultimately that the temporal power of the State be brought into the Law, and led into freedom and prosperity by the application of its principles. It's hard to know where to start with this one. It is a plain call for theocracy. When Crowley referred to the group as a vessel for "certain social plans" he meant that it was supposed to take over the governments of the world. This is not its intent today and it never had any realistic hope of attaining this regrettable goal. At most it may be a sort of alternative government or "temporary autonomous zone" for its members, who prefer to rely on its own internal processes for interacting with other members. Even those members who wish to see the establishment of a Thelemic theocracy (and there are some) mostly resist the suggestion that the O.T.O. illustrates what such a state would be like.

Beyond this, there is again a sort of social cluelessness here. Any who made themselves such pests with persons of status would soon find themselves disinvited from their company. This "inducement" is not today a duty of membership. The happy result is that those of us with friends of prominence are able to keep those friends, treating them as equals and exerting whatever influence we have on them through the ordinary processes of friendship, rather than by nagging them to join a particular group which may or may not be to their taste.

Every Brother is expected to do all in his power to induce his personal friends to accept the Law and join the Order. He should therefore endeavor to make new friends outside the Order, for the purpose of widening its scope.

Not only the powerful, it seems, but every friend whatsoever, is to be regarded largely as potential conversion fodder. Potential members should know that they are not in fact

expected to behave in this dehumanizing way.

MIXED MARRIAGE

The letter condemns marriage outside the Order:

It is desirable that the marriage partner of any Brother should also be a member of the Order. Neglect to insist upon this leads frequently to serious trouble for both parties, especially the uninitiate.

This is a relatively temperate form of intolerance by the standards of the letter. We are not forbidden to marry the "troglydites" and "animals" outside the Order, only discouraged from doing so.

At the same time, there may be something more than intolerance here. Those who have belonged to magical lodges, pagan covens, and such are aware that for only one partner to be involved can put stress on a relationship. It is easy for suspicions to form when one partner frequently returns home late at night, perhaps smelling of incense and a bit tipsy from the ritual. If the group has something to do with nudism or sex magick, that can make the ground even more fertile for suspicion. Nonetheless, there can be and are many healthy relationships of this type. It helps if both partners are friends with the members, even though only one is a member. There is something to this paragraph, but it could stand to be expressed in a more open and humane way.

Members of the Order may expect to find suitable marriage partners in the extremely select body to which they belong. Community of interest and hope being already established, it is natural to suppose that where mutual attraction also exists, a marriage will result in perfect happiness.

This passage reaffirms a preference for marriage within the group. Its idealistic expectation of perfect happiness in such a union may be forgiven as an excess of optimism. However, it does not reflect the actual course of all marriages between members of the group, which are no more stable or happy than marriages in society as a whole. It promises too much.

MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

The letter's statements on childbirth and child-rearing are among its strangest, and among the least applicable to either past or current practice.

All pregnant women are especially sacred to members of the Order, and no effort should be spared to bring them to acceptance of the Law of Freedom, so that the unborn may benefit by that impression. They should be induced to become members of the Order, so that the child may be born under its aegis.

There is definitely no such outreach program to convert pregnant women in practice, and the prospective member need have no concern that it will be his or her duty to proselytize any pregnant friends. The particular mythic cycle that is celebrated in the Order does revere pregnancy and childbirth as important symbols on both literal and symbolic planes, but we do not today translate that into a program to convert them.

If the mother that is to be have asserted her will to be so in contempt and defiance of the Tabus of the slave-gods, she is to be regarded as especially suitable to our Order, and the Master of the Lodge in her district shall offer to become, as it were, godfather to the child, who shall be trained specially, if the mother so wishes, as a servant of the Order, in one of its Profess-Houses.

The Order does not raise anyone as its special servant. The Master of a Lodge need not be male, which is assumed in the above passage, and I have not heard of any cases of adoption along the lines described.

As for women who have children "in contempt and defiance of the Tabus of the slave-gods," that is a euphemistic way of referring to children born out of wedlock. While the O.T.O. is a radically sex-positive organization and stands against sexual repression as a point of primary doctrine, we simply make ourselves known as such in trust that those of like mind will be attracted or not as they will. We do not establish programs of the sort described above, as if a common act such as having a child out of wedlock could somehow indicate like-mindedness by itself.

(The thought of "Uncle Aleister's Home for Wayward Girls" is not a pleasant one by any means!)

Women of the Order who are about to become mothers receive all care, attention, and honour from all Brethren.

Special Profess-Houses will be established for their convenience, should they wish to take advantage of them.

Special Profess-Houses for the care of women of the Order, or those whose husbands or lovers are members of the Order, will be instituted, so that the frontal duty of womankind may be carried out in all comfort and honour.

"The frontal duty of womankind" is said to be childbirth. Crowley's view of woman as primarily intended for childbirth has been dealt with elsewhere, by Content Love Knowles and others. It is an archaic attitude which does not reflect current consensus.

In addition, there are no houses established for caretaking during pregnancy -- though it is not necessarily a bad idea -- and it would be misleading to let prospective female members think otherwise.

Children of all Brethren are entitled to the care of the Order, and arrangements will be made to educate them in certain of the Profess-Houses of the Order.

Children of Brethren who are left orphans will be officially adopted by the Master of his Lodge, or if the latter decline, by the Supreme Holy King himself, and treated in all ways as if they were his own.

Brethren who have a right to some especial interest in any child whose mother is not a member of the Order may recommend it especially to the care of their lodges or of Grand Lodge.

These statements reflect a communal attitude toward child-raising which I have not seen practiced. Children of Order members are raised according to the usual societal norms in most cases, which means by the parent(s). The Order does not provide children with schooling; there are no provisions even for the "Sunday school" type of religious education of mainstream Christianity. The Order may in some cases practice charity towards orphans left by deceased members, but there is no guarantee of it, and when it does happen it is handled informally. There is no guarantee of adoption, though in a close-knit community of moderate size it would seem a reasonable expectation. Any adopting parent would not necessarily be the Lodge Master.

MONEY AND PROPERTY

Crowley was accused by his predecessor, Theodor Reuss, of "communistic" ideas, which Crowley angrily denied. However, when we look at his ideas on property, it does seem that he favored the holding of property in common trust. In some ways this is more radical than conventional communism, which only holds that property which is used as "means of production" -- for instance, factory equipment -- should be publicly owned. He also believed that professionals should be obliged to give their services for free to the Order.

None of his ideas about property or profession are currently practiced. Potential members need not be concerned that they will incur obligations of money or services beyond those of dues and voluntary charity.

Every Brother who may possess mines, land, or houses more than he can himself constantly occupy, should donate part of such mines or land, or one or more of such houses to the Order.

Not only is this not practiced, but the Order currently declines all offers of real property, due to administrative overhead and property taxes. While it may eventually become possible for such gifts to be accepted, they are not required, and it would be very surprising if this changed in the future.

All Brethren are bound by their fealty to offer their service in their particular trade, business, or profession, to the Grand Lodge. For example, a stationer will supply Grand Lodge with paper, vellum, and the like; a bookseller offer any books to the Library of Grand Lodge which the Librarian may desire to possess; a lawyer will execute any legal business for Grand Lodge, and a railway or steamship owner or director see to it that the Great Officers travel in comfort wherever they may wish to go.

In a word, no. Crowley was not a professional, unless prophecy is a profession, and did not realize the very serious problems that such requirements would cause. While gifts of professional service are often appreciated, they are not required, and certainly extensive and compromising gifts of the type specified above would be frowned upon. One can only imagine the airline executive's explanations to the Board of Directors!

In sickness all Brethren have the right to medical or surgical care and attendance from any Brethren of the Lodge who may be physicians, surgeons, or nurses.

As for services which are expensive and which everyone needs, such as medical care and legal advice, it is hard to imagine a better way to discourage aspirants of the affected professions than telling them they are to become permanent pro bono caregivers for the entire group. I think it is no accident that we have few members today who are doctors or lawyers. This is unfortunate, because despite what the letter may say, they would not be expected to sacrifice their careers in this manner.

If the Brother so desire, the entire amount of the fees and subscriptions which he has paid during his life will be handed over by the Order to his heirs and legatees. The Order thus affords an absolute system of insurance in addition to its other benefits. This is not practiced. In my opinion the leadership should take special care, for reasons of liability, to make sure that it does not make false promises of future remuneration of dues.

All Brethren who may fall into indigence have a right to the direct assistance of the Order up to the full amount of fees and subscriptions paid by them up to the time of application. This will be regarded as a loan, but no interest will be charged upon it. That this privilege may not be abused, the Grand Tribunal will decide whether or no such application is made in good faith.

Again, this is not the practice of the Order. It is traditional for fraternal groups to be organized as "benevolent societies," which act as a form of insurance for its members, especially life and burial insurance. The above statements are traditional in that regard and can be traced back to our Freemasonic origins. The O.T.O., however, is not currently organized as a beneficial society or an insurance company, which in my view is just as well. A common complaint about many of the smaller surviving fraternal orders is that they have become nothing but life insurance schemes. Prospective and current members should be aware that their dues and fees are not payments into any kind of insurance fund.

Members of the IX°, who share among themselves the whole property of the Order according to the rules of that degree, may, of course, reside there permanently. Indeed, the house of every Brother of this grade is, ipso facto, a Profess-House of the Order. So, ladies, should you become pregnant, be sure to drop in on the local IX°'s house for a few months of free room and board!

In all seriousness, this is somewhat true and somewhat false. The property of the Order is held by its corporate entity, not by its inner circle. There are no Profess Houses per se in the Order, though there have always been discussions of establishing them. If they were established they would not exist exactly as described in the letter. On the other hand, members of the IX° do administer the Order's property, and do practice some form of personal hospitality which could perhaps be considered a partial implementation of a Profess House. The passage is ambiguously true but largely misleading.

OCCUPATION AND CLASS

The class assumptions of the O.T.O. are derived from Crowley's Victorian background and have little applicability to most of us today.

Personal or domestic attendants should be chosen from among the members of the Order when possible, and great tact and courtesy are to be employed in dealing with them.

They, on their part, will render willing and intelligent service.

While in Lodge, and on special occasions, they are to be treated as Brothers, with perfect equality; such behaviour is undesirable during the hours of service, and familiarity, subversive as it is of all discipline and order, is to be avoided by adopting a complete and marked change of manner and address.

Reading this merry and unthinking endorsement of traditional English social class discrimination, the modern American is likely to shudder a bit. It is interesting to note how much our ideas of freedom are different from Crowley's, and amusing to observe that he probably thought he was being progressive at the time.

As explained above, Brethren are entirely free of most legal burdens, since lawsuits are not permitted within the Order, and since they may call upon the legal advisers of the Order to defend them against their enemies in case of need.

Again, no one should join thinking they are likely to obtain any free legal advice. The Order does not have crack teams of attorneys ready to spring to its members' defense, and what attorneys it may have among its membership are not required to give pro bono service to other members.

The Order offers great social advantages to its members, bringing them as it does into constant association with men and women of high rank.

I don't know quite how to say this, but in fact the membership of the Order today is not made up of people who are "of high rank," whatever that might mean in this day and age. Just as the phrase "pagan poverty level" has become a commonplace among our relatives in the modern witchcraft movement and its offshoots, we find ourselves largely made up of those who do not share the overarching social values that require money and title as measures of success. Many of us are successful in conventional careers, but I have yet to meet a corporate CEO, a military general, a major celebrity, or the like in the O.T.O. I do not think we are any the worse for this but it seems important to correct the mistaken promise of the letter.

The Order offers extraordinary opportunities to its members in their trades, businesses, or professions, aiding them by co-operation, and securing them clients or customers. There are some career opportunities to be pursued in some bodies of the Order, but not all. The membership has never been large enough to fulfill the promise given here. A business that relied on the O.T.O. to provide customers would soon be forced into bankruptcy. Help in a professional career path, as opposed to the occasional service job, would be a hit or miss proposition given the small size of the membership. One would generally have better chances dealing with other members of one's chosen profession than relying on one's scattered colleagues within the Order.

It is perhaps worth noting here that Crowley never held a regular job, starting adult life as an heir and later living off donations, and it would be unrealistic to expect him to have understood the career potential within a group.

NOT REALLY

There are a few other miscellaneous provisions of the letter which are not practiced.

They shall respond heartily to every summons of the Lodge or Chapter to which they may belong, not lightly making excuse.

In fact, in current practice there is no such thing as a mandatory meeting of a Camp, Oasis or Lodge. Attendance is on a voluntary basis. At least one body has had to be corrected in this regard in recent years.

Colleges of the Order will presently be established where the children of its members may be trained in all trades, businesses, and professions, and there they may study the liberal arts and humane letters, as well as our holy and arcane science. Brethren are expected to do all in their power to make possible the establishment of such Universities.

This is not necessarily a bad idea. Many good universities and colleges have been founded by religious groups. However, it is entirely beyond the resources of the Order at this stage of its development, and I know of no serious plans to put it into effect at any point in the foreseeable future.

The crime of slander, which causes so great a proportion of human misery, is rendered extremely dangerous, if not impossible, within the Order by a clause in the Obligation of the Third Degree.

One could only hope. Sadly, the truth is that this clause has not been effective in banishing slander within the Order. It is impossible to discuss the issue in detail within this forum, but anyone who thinks that by joining they will be effectively protected against the slander of other members is likely to have a rude awakening. That is not to say that slander is commonly practiced, but in any group of religious people, there are some who love to moralize and excoriate, and the O.T.O. is not, unfortunately, the single religious group in human history that has managed to rid itself of this failing. It is a worthwhile goal but if we are ever to achieve it we will have to find a better way than the aforementioned clause.

CONCLUSION

The Open Letter is a historical artifact which should be preserved just as it is, as part of the inheritance of the Order. However, it desperately needs to be placed in its proper context, as representative of Crowley's ideals for what the Order might some day become. If it is presented as an actual set of requirements and promises on the current membership, it is misleading, even fraudulent at places. Its more unrealistic and intolerant passages may have already cost us worthy members, who have read the letter and decided that they would not care to be associated with the imaginary organization described therein. We should set about creating a better description, and relegate this one to the archives where it belongs.

(Author's note: An earlier draft of this essay inspired Sabazius X° to issue a clarification on the current interpretation of Liber CI. His clarification now resides on the O.T.O. web site.)

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The Freedom of Doubt

by Tim Maroney (1998)

(Originally published in The Scarlet Letter.)

Today we think of skepticism and religion as necessarily opposed. Religion by its nature promotes dogma, and skeptics are above all else dogma's enemies. Is there a way to reconcile these warring siblings, the doubter and the dogmatist? There may be, but we will have to delve deep into the skeptical way to find it. In contrast to modern "debunking" skepticism, classical skepticism has significant points of contact with mystical ideas of post-rational states of mind, and explains a way to be open to religious ideas and trances without believing in them.

Skepticism uses reasoning to deconstruct reasoning, promising a happy state of suspended judgment known as ataraxia. Parallels to ataraxia include mystical enlightenment, the koans of Zen, the undifferentiated awareness of Yogic samadhi, and the English mystic Aleister Crowley's "crossing the Abyss." Crowley is often interesting due to his attempts to reconcile mysticism with philosophy. I will often refer to him here because he describes himself as a skeptical mystic.

The Modes and Slogans

Most of our knowledge of classical skepticism comes from the writings of Sextus Empiricus, the second century CE Greek philosopher, whose *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*¹ summarizes an older system founded by Pyrrho. Sextus writes of the difficulty of being certain of the conclusions of philosophy, and explains the "modes of epochê" (eh-pah-KAY), or methods for suspending judgment. Using these modes one discovers equally plausible alternative ways of looking at dogmatic assertions.

Epochê has aged well. Recent philosophical achievements such as Nietzschean post-moral relativism and Gödel's Theorem find ancient counterparts in the modes, and epochê became an important part of phenomenology, a paradigm of importance to twentieth century psychology and anthropology. Its founder, Edmund Husserl, cast epochê as a state "which completely bars me from using any judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence".²

Sextus gives four lists of modes of epochê. Space permits me to consider only two of the lists (see table 1). The first list gives ten modes. Although the mode of relativity is inconspicuously listed in eighth place, it is the general case of most of the other modes. All things are observed in relation to other things, including relations to their observers,

rather than by themselves, and so we can say nothing about how things are in themselves, but only how they appear to be relative to other things.

Associated modes list specific relations between observers and the observed. The first three modes note the role our biological existence has in creating judgments. Animals perceive things differently from species to species, just as the perceptions and interpretations of individual people differ. Sense organs and mental processes produce particular sensations and judgments that conjure only certain relative qualities. We see as red what the dog sees as gray; which is correct? The mode of admixtures notes that our sensations are made up not only of their apparent objects but of the intervening media, the environment, the sense organs, and the intellect.

Some Modes of Epochê (Table 1)

The Ten Older Modes

The Variety of Animals

Differences Among Human Beings

Differences in the Sense Organs

Circumstances

Positions, Distances and Locations

Admixtures

Quantity and Constitution of External Objects

Relativity

Frequency and Infrequency of Occurrence

Ways of Life, Customs and Laws, Mythic Beliefs and Dogmatic Opinions

The Five More Recent Modes

Disagreement

Infinite Regress

Relativity

Hypothesis

Circularity

Other modes note the relativity between observers in different conditions, such as old or young, hungry or sated, moving or still. There are also relativistic effects from distance, position, and rarity. Form or constitution is a relation that creates disagreement in qualities: the same objects have different qualities in different forms, such as sand which appears rough when scattered, but smooth when formed into a dune. Is sand rough or smooth?

The tenth mode, the mode of "ways of life, customs and laws, mythic beliefs and dogmatic opinions," is a principle of moral relativity, undercutting dogmatic ideas of good and evil. Different cultures disagree on the moral value of particular actions, such as eating with the hands or having sex in public. The more we know about other cultures, the less we can be sure that our own moral judgments are inherently correct.

Next comes a list of five more recent modes. The first is disagreement -- when people

disagree about a subject, and there seems to be no clear way of resolving the disagreement, we must withhold judgment. The second mode notes the infinite regress created by resting arguments on assumptions. Every argument necessarily has premises, but an argument is needed to justify those premises, but then that argument has premises which themselves require further justification. This creates a logical absurdity, an infinite regress. Therefore, no argument rests on firm ground. The third mode, relativity, is already familiar. The mode of hypothesis notes that escaping from infinite regress by simply accepting premises without question leaves those premises questionable and the conclusion in doubt.

Finally there is the mode of circularity. This refers to the well-known fallacy of the circular form of argument in which premises are validated by the conclusion. For instance, if we were to say that the Book of the Law is true because it says it is true, and since the book is true its claim about its truthfulness could not be false, we would be reasoning in a circle.

If the modes of epochê are the negative face of skepticism, the slogans are the positive (see table 2). "I withhold assent" and "perhaps and perhaps not" are skeptical responses to "dogmatic statements about the non-evident." "Not more (this than that)" means that there seem to be other ways of looking at the situation. And so for the other slogans.

The Skeptical Slogans (Table 2)

"Not more," "nothing more" -- "not more this than that, up nor down"

"Non-assertion" (aphasia)

"Perhaps," "It is possible," "Maybe", "Perhaps, and perhaps not"

"I withhold assent" -- "I am unable to say which of the alternatives I ought to believe and which not"

"I determine nothing" -- "I am now in such a state of mind as to neither affirm or deny dogmatically the matters in question"

"Everything is indeterminate" -- "There seems no reason to prefer any dogmatic opinion to any other"

"Everything is non-apprehensible" -- "All matters of dogmatic inquiry which I have considered seem to me non-apprehensible"

"I am non-apprehensive" or "I do not apprehend"

"To every argument an equal argument is opposed"

The final slogan is "to every argument an equal argument is opposed." This is given two different interpretations. One is that we ought to try to answer every argument with an opposing argument. Another holds that there is for every argument a sort of anti-argument that destroys it. The latter, if carelessly phrased, would be a dogmatic assertion, since we have not yet heard every possible argument and therefore cannot know whether future arguments may prove stronger than those we have examined so far. Nor do we know whether our belief that we have countered any particular argument will continue to seem accurate, since flaws could lurk within our refutations. For that

reason Sextus brackets this interpretation of the slogan with modifiers which, although not among the slogans, are just as often repeated: "it seems to me now" and "of those we have so far examined."

This self-referentiality is one of skepticism's strong points. It is not entirely convinced even of its own method, and instead of creating new dogmas -- for instance, that nothing could ever be proven -- it recognizes that its findings are themselves appearances or seemings, subject to change in the future, and based on a less than complete understanding. Belief is transfigured into a non-dogmatic mode, but we are not faced with the impossible task of accepting nothing.

Accepting without Belief

Epochê is sometimes translated as "abstention." Is skepticism an ascetic state of renunciation? What do we do after we have deconstructed all certainty? Should we ignore the aching in our bellies as illusory? David Hume complains that Pyrrhonism would lead to a world where "all human life must perish... and men remain in a total lethargy, till the necessities of nature, unsatisfied, put an end to their miserable existence."³ Sextus, however, says this:

The honey appears to us to be sweet. This we grant, for we sense the sweetness. But whether it is sweet we question insofar as this has to do with the theory, for that theory is not the appearance, but something said about the appearance.... Holding to the appearances, then, we live without beliefs but in accord with the ordinary regimen of life, since we cannot be wholly inactive. ⁴
And later,

We follow without doctrinal belief the common course of life and we say that there are gods, and we reverence gods and ascribe to them foreknowledge....⁵

Despite saying that there are gods, Sextus goes on to refute the most important philosophical and theological theories of deity, and expresses a pagan version of the Problem of Evil: the contradiction between the absolutely good and all-powerful nature of deity and the evil in the world. He does not believe in gods but he says that there are gods. I will return to this important point.

We might ask whether Sextus is pulling back from the import of skepticism. Why do we need to eat, drink, and align ourselves with the mores of society, if these things rest on insupportable theories? They don't; ordinary life rests on appearances. Appearances can be called into question, but we might as well accept them in the ordinary course of events. What compelling reason is there to oppose them? The bizarre life of the ascetic is more likely to result from a dogmatic religious theory rather than the skeptic's abstention from statements about the world in itself.

In the essay "The Soldier and the Hunchback," Crowley arrives at a similar conclusion when asking how anything shall stand before the destructiveness of skepticism: "Well, one of the buttresses is just the small matter of common sense." He goes on to explain that although it cannot be proved that his friend Dorothy and her sausage sandwiches

even exist, "it's the taste I like."⁶ "Why not be a clean-living Irish gentleman, even if you do have insane ideas about the universe?"⁷

Ataraxia and Enlightenment

Skepticism does not force us to ignore the world around us or to adopt an ascetic way of life. What, then, are these modes and slogans for? They are said to create *aporia*, a desirable state of bemusement. The intellect is dumbstruck before a wealth of contradictory ideas. By cultivating *aporia*, holds Sextus, one can attain *ataraxia*, a state of happiness caused by ceasing to ascribe good or evil values to phenomena.

Is *ataraxia* a "mystical" goal? That is a matter of definition. It is psychological, not supernatural, but it is targeted at an improvement of the inner life of humanity through mental discipline. The teaching that *aporia* leads to *ataraxia* resembles a religious doctrine. Sextus' insistence on the efficacy of the skeptical method in creating happiness may seem to be a weak point in his presentation. Generally he is careful to be skeptical even about skepticism, rarely insisting on the permanence of any assertion or conclusion. Casting skepticism as a way of life with dramatic results in creating personal happiness is uncharacteristically sweeping, perhaps even dogmatic.

One can easily draw parallels between this doctrine and the Buddhist idea of escaping sorrow by detachment from the judgment of conditions as desirable or undesirable. It could also be compared with Crowley's idea of achieving "true wisdom and perfect happiness" by opposing each idea with its contradiction. While each of these doctrines has unique features and it would be a mistake to draw a simplistic equation between them, they have a common thread, an attempt to free the mind of preconceived values by breeding alternative perspectives and loosening rigid value judgments. The result is a type of happy wisdom. This accomplishment, variously called *ataraxia*, enlightenment, or "exalted degree," cures the disease of dogmatic judgment.

Like any religious doctrine, this one is susceptible to skeptical questions. How do we know that *ataraxia* exists? Is it permanent or transitory? Does the method of *aporia* work for everyone? Is *ataraxia* an achievement or a preexisting personality type? Is the description of the experience accurate? Under what system of values is the state praiseworthy? Since *ataraxia* seems to be an object of adoration, might its adorer have exaggerated its attributes? If I poke you in the eye with a stick, will you not still cry, enlightened one? Sextus has answers to some of these questions, much as Buddhists do in the Questions of King Milinda, but they are not always convincing in either case.

Crowley's skeptico-mystical text "*Liber Os Abysmi vel Da'ath*"⁸, describes a philosophical practice purported to lead to a transcendence of rationality, or as Crowley liked to say, "crossing the Abyss."

Let the Exempt Adept procure the *Prolegomena* of Kant, and study it, paying special attention to the Antinomies. Also Hume's doctrine of Causality in his "Enquiry."... Also Huxley's *Essays on Hume and Berkeley*... [Etc.] Now let him consider special problems, such as the Origin of the World, the Origin of Evil, Infinity, the Absolute, the Ego and the

non-Ego, Freewill and Destiny, and such others as may attract him. Let him subtly and exactly demonstrate the fallacies of every known solution, and let him seek a true solution by his right Ingenium.

Such a skewering of all known philosophies is just what Sextus accomplished in his day with the modes of epochê. Crowley, unlike Sextus, seems to be saying that the mystic should seek new solutions, but the seeker is being set up for failure:

Let then his reason hurl itself again and again against the blank wall of mystery which will confront him.... Then will all phenomena which present themselves to him appear meaningless and disconnected, and his own Ego will break up into a series of impressions having no relation one with the other, or with any other thing... [His state of insanity] may end in ... his rebirth into his own body and mind with the simplicity of a little child. And then shall he find all his faculties unimpaired, yet cleansed in a manner ineffable.... Hath he not attained to Understanding?

Flowery language aside, having thoroughly experienced the futility of philosophical reasoning, the mystic has been freed from its grip.

The Hindu mantra "neti, neti" ("not this, not this"), which denies the accuracy of perceptions and judgments, is directly negative rather than skeptically detached, but it is similar to withholding assent. Samadhi in Hindu Yoga is the mystical trance of the reconciliation of opposites, or non-duality. Crowley recommends a method of inducing samadhi by conjoining each thought with its contradiction. In *The Book of Lies* he explains that the meditator "enters into his Samadhi, and he piles contradiction upon contradiction, and thus a higher degree of rapture, with every sentence, until his armoury is exhausted, and... he enters the supreme state."⁹ His method recalls the final skeptical slogan, "to every argument an equal argument is opposed." This is a persistent theme of *The Book of Lies*, and its clearest point of contact with skepticism comes in chapter 45, entitled "Chinese Music". I note in [brackets] some parallels with the modes of epochê:

Proof is only possible in mathematics, and mathematics is only a matter of arbitrary conventions. [The mode of hypothesis.]

"White is white" is the lash of the overseer; "white is black" is the watchword of the slave. The Master takes no heed. [The mode of conditions.]

The Chinese cannot help thinking that the octave has 5 notes. [The mode of ways of life, customs and laws.]

The more necessary anything appears to my mind, the more certain it is that I only assert a limitation.

He says in a commentary that in the latter two sentences, "we find a most important statement, a practical aspect of the fact that all truth is relative," the mode of relativity.

The chapter closes with one of Crowley's more recognizable quotes:

I slept with Faith, and found a corpse in my arms on awaking; I drank and danced all night with Doubt, and found her a virgin in the morning.

He comments that "we see how skepticism keeps the mind fresh, whereas faith dies in the very sleep that it induces." Skepticism is presented as a meditative discipline, a vivid spiritual deconstruction of normal modes of belief.

Skepticism in its mystical mode is a quest for a trans-rational state which does not shut out rationality but multiplies thought into a broad and unfettered symphony, without investing any one thought with too much seriousness. While this might not make a poke in the eye any more pleasant, it could provide both aesthetic reward and a buffer against unpleasant thoughts and sensations. The benefits of ataraxia may be exaggerated, but Sextus's report of a happy result from aporia may yet refer to some real and useful mental state.

Skepticism and Religious Dogma

It is surprising to find common ground between skepticism and religion because religion seems intrinsically dogmatic. Its dubious assertions fall readily before the skeptical scythe. The religious sometimes respond that their beliefs are not dogmatic but experiential. This fails to justify dogmatic interpretations of experiences, though. For instance, it may well be that someone has the experience of conversing with Jesus, but that does not prove the theory that Jesus exists. Similarly, though the trance of samadhi may occur, that does not demonstrate that samadhi redeems us in the next world.

Vivekananda, the well-known Indian mystic (1863-1902), wrote that rationality can serve as a guardian for the mystic.

Stick to your reason until you reach something higher; and you will know it to be higher because it will not jar with reason. The stage beyond consciousness is inspiration (samadhi)... There is no external test for inspiration; we know it ourselves. Our guard against mistake is negative: the voice of reason. All religion means going beyond reason; but reason is the only guide to get there.¹⁰

In ancient India there was a philosophical movement called Câr vâka or Lokâyata, a form of materialism resembling Pyrrhonism in important ways, and much disliked by the religious. Unfortunately this movement's own writings have not survived, but we do possess responses to Câr vâka philosophy in the writings of its many opponents. The Câr vâkas deny the reality and transmigration of the self and the possibility of salvation in another world, which are pillars of mainstream Indian philosophy. These skeptics admit only perception as a mode of knowledge, much as Pyrrhonists accept only appearances. But is samadhi a perception? It seems it must be. A trance is a state of mind, and so it is perceived; it has an appearance and so it can be known.

Did the Câr vâkas accept trances while denying that they involved the invisible soul or âtman, or provided otherworldly redemption? So it would appear from the account of Gunaratna 11, who tells us that the hedonistic Câr vâkas "carry human skulls, smear their bodies with ashes and practice yoga." These skeptical yogins disagree with the conventional sâdhus or holy men who seek redemption through meditation, but they do

not deny that they attain pleasure through meditation; they say simply that meditation has no purpose, that "dharma is not superior to kâma," that is, that meditation is no better than the pleasure of the body.

To consider another form of skeptical mysticism, Crowley's essay "The Soldier and the Hunchback" says that we should not waver from asking any reasonable question, but once we have done so we will find the questions turning into answers as we climb the spiritual ladder. Employing the (awkward) metaphor of question marks as hunchbacks and exclamation points as soldiers, he says:

It takes a moment for a hunchback to kill his man, and the farther we get from our base the longer he takes. You may crumble to ashes the dream-world of a boy, as it were, between your fingers; but before you can bring the physical universe tumbling about a man's ears he requires to drill his hunchbacks so devilish well that they are terribly like soldiers themselves. And a question capable of shaking the consciousness of Samadhi could, I imagine, give long odds to one of Frederick's grenadiers.¹²

As Crowley implies, it seems likely that the average skeptic does acquire some belief in the power of the tools of questioning. However, he goes too far in trying to cast the modes of epochê as positives: a question is only a question. Crowley makes two mistakes. First, he believes without question in the theological model often known as the Great Chain of Being (though he does not call it that) by which existence is ordered from the most to the least sacred. Crowley's Qabalistic ladder stretches from the hellish Qliphoth through the fields we know up to the ultimate Kether of Yetzirah and the Veils of Negative Existence. This model is a cosmological dogma and it is easily thrown into doubt by simple application of the modes of epochê. Without the ladder, there is no basis for believing in a transformation of questions as we climb.

Second, Crowley is emotionally driven to find a way out of questioning and into certainty, while the Pyrrhonist sees questioning as a pleasant state sufficient unto itself. Again and again in the essay he expresses his desire that questions marks should turn into exclamation points: "we may now resume our attempt to drill our hunchback into a presentable soldier," "wouldn't it be jolly if our own second ? suddenly straightened its back and threw its chest out and marched off as ! ?", and so on. Elsewhere he says that "doubt is a good servant but a bad master"¹³. He wants to have absolute conviction in a religious system yet still be a skeptic.

This desire for certainty led him to create a dogmatic religious system. The definition of his magical order A.∴ A.∴ contains this belief requirement:

All members must of necessity work in accordance with the facts of Nature... So must all Members of the A.∴ A.∴ work by the Magical Formula of the Æon. They must accept the Book of the Law as the Word and the Letter of Truth, and the sole Rule of Life. They must acknowledge the Authority of the Beast 666 and of the Scarlet Woman as in the book it is defined, and accept Their Will as concentrating the Will of our Whole Order. They must accept the Crowned and Conquering Child as the Lord of the Æon, and exert themselves to establish His reign upon Earth. They must acknowledge that "The Word

of the Law is Thelema" and that "Love is the law, love under will."¹⁴
A skeptic would respond simply "maybe, and maybe not."

Despite his skeptical meditation practice, Crowley believed that his particular religious doctrine was an absolute truth and that it was merely a mistake to disagree with it. We can also easily find evidence of dogmatism in Buddhism and Hinduism, despite their elements of skepticism. Dogmatism is tempting. There seems to be something in us that draws us toward conviction in the non-evident. Even Sextus seems to have a system of thought that rests on the non-evident proposition that *aporia* leads to *ataraxia*. We find a comfort in certainty and an anxiety in doubt, and so we love systems of religion and philosophy. Their self-assured dogmas give us a feeling of place in the universe and of participation in an overarching order.

Should we resist this tendency? Is Sextus wrong in maintaining that suspension of judgment will make us happy? Do we need to be certain of things? Is this need so strong that it can justify holding mistaken beliefs, such as the belief that God lives in the sky, or that diseases are caused by malevolent spirits, or that Buddha remembered all his millions of past lives, or that Vishnu was born as a fish, or that our courses on earth have been foreordained by the True Will? Shall we simply accept that credulity is necessary to our happiness and forget that our pet dogmas are probably false?

The answer is a matter of degrees. We might not believe that Vishnu had ever been born as a fish, but we could find some wisdom in the story of this scaly avatar, as we might in any fiction, and so our reaction to the story could be accepting while not believing. We know from Kuhn that science is an unreliable social process, but still we accept galaxies and molecules. There are many degrees of belief and many types of acceptance. To be a dogmatist is not simply to act as if any statement has value but to insist that some non-evident insistence about the world is definitely and lastingly true.

The ancients knew that affirming the value of a myth does not require affirming its accuracy. Plutarch, for example, insists on a nonliteral but positive interpretation of Egyptian myth: "We must not treat legend as if it were history at all, but we should adopt that which is appropriate in each legend in accordance with its verisimilitude,"¹⁵ that is, symbolically, in the way that myth resembles the world. Perhaps this non-literalistic affirmation is what Crowley meant by his apparently dogmatic A.∴ A.∴ belief requirement? Perhaps we must be willing to act as if these myths were true, even though we do not believe in them? Unfortunately, no. In a footnote to the passage above, he addresses the conflict between freedom of thought and doctrinal mandate:

This is not in contradiction with the absolute right of every person to do his own true Will. But any True Will is of necessity in harmony with the facts of Existence; and to refuse to accept the Book of the Law is to create a conflict within Nature, as if a physicist insisted on using an incorrect formula of mechanics as the basis of an experiment.

This is an exhortation to literal belief, not deliteralized mythic engagement. It is a fact of Nature that the Book of the Law is the scripture appointed for humanity in this *Æon*. No

skeptics need apply.

In Crowley's other magical order, the Ordo Templi Orientis, applicants to the first degree of initiation sign a form affirming that they accept the Book of the Law. This is a modern requirement dating only from the late 1970's and early 1980's.¹⁶ Because of the use of the term "accept," the form may derive from the A. . . A. . . passage above, but it has a more liberal interpretation -- it is taken to mean only that the applicant does not wish to publish a changed edition, which is a peculiar reading of "acceptance" of scripture. The fact that the acceptance requirement has been reinterpreted is interesting. It shows that the current membership is less comfortable with dogmatism than Crowley was, and is willing to make space for deliteralized but still positive interpretations of scripture. Today's membership rebels at aspects of Crowley's dogmatism.

This liberal reinterpretation is a work in progress. While a bald dogmatic statement requiring belief in a particular book is unpalatable today, other pillars of Crowley's system are still widely granted the status of fact by his followers. The two most prominent dogmas are True Will and the procession of the Æons.¹⁷ Neither of these primary dogmas are viewed simply as myths or fictions; instead they are regularly asserted as fact. Yet neither one is well supported by evidence or argument, nor are they phenomenological truths like the experience of samadhi. They are believed on faith. As myths their value is beyond skepticism's power, but as assertions of truth they are vulnerable to the modes of epochê.

Sextus' observation of the skeptical attitude toward gods -- to accept their traditional attributes and yet withhold belief -- shows one way out of this dilemma. We need not condemn the ideas of the Æons or of True Will; we need only to "bracket" them (in Husserl's phrase), to place them within their context where they can provide spiritual sustenance without degenerating into dogma. Skeptics within a mystical or magical tradition are free to frame its myths as the fictions they are. Doubt is not a constraint -- it does not forbid us from exploring the beauties of the spirit, as some modern-day "skeptics" believe. Instead, skepticism frees us to plunge into the profound depths of myth and trance, without concern that we will be blinded by their wonders.

Notes:

1. I have relied throughout on the recent critical edition of Benson Mates, *The Skeptical Way* (Oxford University Press, 1996). I have also consulted the Loeb edition.
2. Joseph J. Kockelmans, ed., *Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretation* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1967), pp. 77-8; see also Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1991), p. 44.
3. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 1748. Harvard Classics (New York: Collier, 1910), vol. 37, sec. XII, p. 416.
4. Mates, op. cit., p. 92.

5. Ibid., p. 173.
6. Aleister Crowley, "The Soldier and the Hunchback", The Equinox, Vol. I, No. I, March 1909, pp. 122-3.
7. Ibid., p. 126.
8. The Equinox, Vol. I, No. VII, March 1912, pp. 77-81.
9. Aleister Crowley, The Book of Lies (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1978), cap. 11, p.33. Also see caps. 31 and 39. Orig. 1913.
10. Vivekananda, The Yogas and Other Works (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekanda Center, 1953), p. 546. From the "Inspired Talks," 1895.
11. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, ed., Cârvăka/Lokâyata : An Anthology of Source Materials and Some Recent Studies (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1990), pp. 266-78. I am indebted to Mordecai Shapiro for referring me to Indian skepticism.
12. "The Soldier and the Hunchback", p. 128.
13. The Book of Lies, ch. 45, p. 100.
14. Aleister Crowley, Magick in Theory and Practice, app. II, pp. 240-1.
15. Plutarch, Isis and Osiris, 374E; F. C. Babbitt, tr., Moralia (Harvard University Press, 1936), p.139.
16. Personal e-mail from Bill Heidrick, September 8 and 9, 1998. "It's mainly from Grady [McMurtry]'s time, with some minor variations in language since. Gross and deliberate misquotes from Liber AL had appeared in print (e.g., in a Level Press unauthorized edition of Liber Aleph and other places). The original reason for the requirement was to conserve the text without such alteration."
17. There are also other prominent but less central dogmas, such as the accuracy of the Tree of Life model of the universe as interpreted by Crowley and the Golden Dawn; the reality of reincarnation, chakras, Secret Chiefs, and incorporeal spirit beings; the ancient descent and unique power of a particular sex magick formula; and the efficacy of thaumaturgy, divination, numerology, astrology and initiation. Skeptical questions about these dogmas are not frequently raised in the Thelemic community. I hope to address some of them in detail in future columns.
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The Book of Dzian
edited by Tim Maroney

"The most insightful and balanced discussion of Blavatsky's writings to date" - K. Paul Johnson, author of The Masters Revealed

The Book of Dzian is the debut volume in a new series of books from Chaosium exploring the connections between occultism and horror fiction, especially the fiction of H. P. Lovecraft. The series is edited by occult scholar Tim Maroney and the debut volume was published on Mardi Gras, 2000. Reviewer, dealer and distributor inquiries are welcome at tim@maroney.org.

Preface to The Book of Dzian

Although many prominent occultists have practiced the fictional form known as the "weird tale," or more recently simply as "horror," and many horror writers have drawn

from the traditions of occultism, it has rarely been understood how much common ground exists between the twin fields of horror fiction and occultism. Partisans for one side or the other have represented the fiction as mere entertainment or the occultism as mere charlatanism, but in fact, the similarity of themes and styles between the fields is anything but coincidental. Nowhere is this clearer than in the works of the grand master of the weird tale, H. P. Lovecraft, whose unique and evocative fusion of occult tradition and the existential horror of the scientific world has kept his work in the public eye all over the world in the half century since his death.

In this series of books, Chaosium will be exploring in depth the occult sources drawn on by Lovecraft in his disquieting tales of ravening madness, spiritual insight, and the utterly alien. We are pleased to open the series with *The Book of Dzyan* revealed a century ago to Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, herself a writer of weird tales, but best known as the founder of the Theosophical Society, a tremendously influential occult organization that has left its mark not only on all later Western occultists - including Dion Fortune, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, Aleister Crowley, Gerald Gardner, and the founders of the ill-starred Heaven's Gate sect, as well as other UFO devotees, channelers, and the whole New Age movement - but also on Indian history, where it played a major role in reestablishing native pride in the Hindu religion and creating the political party of Mahatma Gandhi.

Of all the many occult traditions he studied, Lovecraft made the greatest use of Theosophy in his fiction and letters. While he was convinced, like most Western intellectuals, that the late Blavatsky had been proven to be a fraud and had tried to pass off sleights of hand as miracles, nonetheless he found her mythology of her *Book of Dzyan* fascinating and understood that his own fiction filled a similar mythological niche. Philosophically they could not have been more opposed but on the plane of images and symbols they came together in a creative conflict that would prove vital to Lovecraft's unique development.

This volume presents both original source materials to shed light on the much misunderstood Blavatsky, and an extensive critical introduction that explores her life and her writings as well as the neglected question of her influence on Lovecraft and others. Recent advances in occult scholarship have allowed the editor to paint a much more complete and detailed picture of Blavatsky than has previously appeared in any one place. Partisan biographies that revere her as a visionary saint or damn her as a con artist are both shown to be oversimplifications of her complex and contradictory character. Especially of interest to the student of the weird tale is the first straightforward explanatory commentary on the manuscript she claimed to have learned of in the hidden lamaseries of Tibet, *The Book of Dzyan*, millions of years older than humanity and the key to all the mysteries of the universe.

In future volumes we will explore other occultists who were used by Lovecraft in his fiction or discussed in his letters and critical writings. We trust that these glimpses beyond the veil of reality will both entertain and inform fans of horror fiction and students of the occult. Perhaps in time both groups will come to understand that, at least in spirit,

they are not so far apart.

About the Editor

Tim Maroney has studied various branches of occultism since his childhood, and he has practiced ritual and meditation for more than twenty years. His varied professional writing credits include articles in Gnosis magazine on spiritual aspects of science fiction and computer networking. In recent years he has emerged as a leading occult scholar on computer networks, often seen on the ARCANA occult scholarship list as well as the Thelema list as an expert in Crowley studies. The present volume is his first book. He has been initiated into Western occult fraternities and is not an uncommon guest at rituals in Wiccan and Gnostic traditions. By day he leads software and user experience projects. He lives in Berkeley, California in the USA.

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Various Essays

This page is always under construction.

Here I have archived a number of my past writings, particularly ones that other people have saved over the years and republished on their own web sites. If you have an old favorite you've squirreled away, please send it to me and I'll consider whether I want to put it here, or whether I would prefer to find all copies and have them burned.

The Included Middle

After I became a member of Scarlet Woman Lodge of the O.T.O. in Austin, Texas in 1997, I began a series of columns for their magazine, The Scarlet Letter. The first two installments came out in 1998. The third was published in the newsletter of Hodos

Chameleonis Oasis in Sacramento, California. The fourth appeared again in the Scarlet Letter.

The Included Middle - A brief essay on the interplay between skepticism and mysticism.
Facts and Phallacies - A much longer essay in response to Hymenæus Beta's Address to the Women's Conference, published in the Magickal Link, the O.T.O.'s international newsletter. This deals in excruciating, pedantic detail with the issue of Aleister Crowley's phallocentrism, and with some modern defenses of the sexist parts of his legacy.

A Letter to Close - A skeptical analysis of Crowley's "An Open Letter to Those Who Would Join the Order".

The Freedom of Doubt - An essay on the classical skepticism of Sextus Empiricus and how it relates to various forms of skepticism in religious and mystical traditions, including a critical look at Crowley's claims of skepticism.

Why I Study Magic

In December 1997 Lilinah Biti-Anat asked me casually why I was into magic. I found this a very hard question to answer and it has taken me three months to get this response into shape. Why the difficulty? I have a distaste for formulaic answers, such as "to know and do my will," and when I approach my real love of the subject I become uneasy. Here is my current understanding of why I continue to be involved with a subject that is so often a source of dismay.

Introduction to Crowley Studies (in Five Voices)

In Fall 1997 this 10,000 word piece erupted from my brain in a great rush over the period of a few hours, preceding the final collapse of my four-year relationship and my resignation from my three-year stint at Apple. I was concerned that no one was looking at the magician Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) from a serious perspective. The O.T.O.'s publications provided only one-sided advocacy pieces, and most casual writing about Crowley was either biographical muckraking that ignored his contributions to spirituality, or devotional writing that assumed the literal truth of his odd system of belief. My own views lie at the center of this triangle. The literary conceit of the five voices was meant to serve two purposes: first, practice for fiction writing; second, a navigational aid for the reader in the sea of conflicting opinions about this most unusual character.

The Problems of Syncretism

This started as a network message on Thelema93-L in 1997, in response to concerns expressed by Jeffrey Smith about juxtaposition of Hebrew and Egyptian divine names in the Golden Dawn. Syncretism is a major issue in modern occultism and paganism, but most of the people practicing it don't know what it is. The idea that the monomyth should be studied as a valid myth rather than disparaged as bad scholarship had been growing in me for some time and this discussion gave me the perfect opportunity to express my thoughts on the subject. This version has been expanded and clarified, including responses to some issues raised by John Everall.

Why Crowley Doesn't Suck

This is another piece from the Thelema93-L mailing list in 1997. It is an attempt to answer the musical question, "Why would anyone study a creep like Aleister Crowley?"

It laid some of the groundwork for the Introduction to Crowley Studies and Why I Study Magic and is presented here in its original form.

Healing the Spiritual Community

This 7,000 word essay on the psychology and sociology of the darker side of spiritual group dynamics was written in 1994. It is one of my life goals to expand this essay to its proper length and publish it as a book.

Theory of Divination

This essay was extracted from a Tarot HyperCard stack I worked on in 1990. It tries to survey a variety of approaches to the question of how and whether divination works. I have fixed it up slightly to remove references to the context in which it originally ran. The multi-theoretical approach of the essay prefigures the multi-voice approach of the Introduction to Crowley Studies. I tried to disguise my own views; see if you can tell which theory I most endorse!

On the Definition of the Sacred

A network message from the late-1980's FidoNet/PODS period, this piece frequently turns up on the networks. The idea of a multi-dimensional analysis of spiritual experience seems to hold up fairly well. The message was written as a blast at a sysop who advocated my exclusion from these computer networks, and who had (conveniently) just made some rather foolish statements about spirituality and language. No one - including the victim - has realized that it could be read as character assassination, and in fact I have gotten requests that I write more non-inflammatory messages like this one!

Twilight Crossing

In the late 1980's, I had a series of visionary dreams and hypnagogic experiences, in which I was initiated in an underground realm by the goddess Hekati and her servant, the sorceress Medea. As a result I became a Hekatean in my own fashion, though at the time I was completely ignorant of Neo-Platonism and her role in it, and relied solely on classical mythology for information. At the same time I was embroiled in a number of disputes with the O.T.O., with Neo-Pagan and Witchcraft groups and with the Temple of Set. The dogmatism and irrationality that had irritated me in my discussions with Christians had turned out to be just as prominent in the esoteric groups in which I had imagined I would one day find a spiritual home. I did not want to join these groups but I wanted to work group ritual. Some of my discussion partners suggested that I should start my own group, and so I sketched out this one, more as a thought-experiment than anything else. Once people started getting interested, I realized I really did not want to run a spiritual group myself and so I rather unceremoniously shut it down. The message illuminates my Hekatean interests with what I have been told is some eloquence, and expresses interesting ideas about how a "liberal" occult group could be run.

Pagan History

This message was written for USENET's talk.religion.misc in early December 1986, in response to a request for information on paganism. I recently rediscovered it on an

egosurfing expedition (that is, I was typing my name into search engines to see what people were saying about me). It is a little starry-eyed about the tolerance of pagans, and there are some issues of historical interpretation that I have since come to approach rather differently, but otherwise the piece seems to need little revision now. I have left it in its original state, except to correct a few typographical errors.

On the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram

After the right-wing fundamentalist Christians who ran the Computer Science department at UNC threw me off the network due to my occult and leftist views, I went to Carnegie Mellon and started the New Age Mailing List. At the time the term "New Age" hadn't been stigmatized as it has now, and this mailing list was "the first international computer network run by a pagan or occultist, for pagans and occultists". This little essay appeared in the first number, on Fri Dec 21, 1984. This is a later draft from June 1990, which I have tweaked again in this March 1998 version. It is a practical instruction in one of the primary rituals of Golden Dawn-derived magic, from which the Wiccan circle ritual also derives. I will probably augment it with pictures in the future.

Even If I Did Believe...

This late draft of an early religious essay from 1983 and 1984 is an example of my "angry young man" phase. I have outgrown the anti-Christianity of the piece, and now feel that Christianity is no better or worse than most other religions overall. Those of us who were raised in it and came to realize that we were being sold a bill of goods naturally have feelings of betrayal, but other religions contain moral and ethical flaws of similar magnitude. This point is often missed because we know about foreign traditions largely from advocacy writing. Nonetheless, even after all this time, I am pleased with the style and the reasoning, and the piece remains a serious challenge to simple-minded Biblical literalism.

I must mention the two strangest things that have happened in connection with this essay. First, a man on net.religion adopted it as a religious creed, deciding that God was real and awful, and arguing from this point of view for several years. He appeared to be sincere. Second, and more recently, I was asked whether the essay could be used in an evangelical training program to make sure the students had answers to all my concerns. I did not respond to the request once its intent was explained and I do not know whether it was used in this way - but of course, educators are largely exempt from normal restrictions of copyright....

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Introduction to Crowley Studies

Introduction to
Crowley Studies
by Tim Maroney

["Do What Thou Wilt"](#)

[The Book of the Law](#)

[The Tree of Life](#)

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[Crowley Making Sign of the Horns](#)

Introduction to Crowley Studies
(in Five Voices)
by Tim Maroney

Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) created a tradition known as Thelema, which is a spiritual or religious system centered around ideas of freedom and personal growth. If you study Crowley or Thelema you will encounter some common themes. This introduction deals with some of the major themes, but only in summary form. Real study requires independent work with the primary sources.

A traditional introduction to a religious system would set forth specific teachings and

practices that its members would be expected to echo with one voice, but Thelema recognizes the validity and holiness of many different voices. This introduction takes the form of five different voices with five different agendas. Your voice is your own to evolve. Your views may or may not resemble any of the views of this introduction. Even if some thought you hold seems almost identical with one of the ideas in this introduction -- or utterly incompatible with all of them! -- it will still be uniquely yours, embedded firmly in your own personal matrix of thought and life in an individual, unique, irreplaceable and sacred way.

The five characters are myself, the Unreliable Narrator, on the main text, and four fictional characters in the voices: the Literalist, the Chaotic, the Skeptic and the Mystic. They are composite voices drawn loosely from the real world. I do not always agree with them, and they do not always agree with each other. I have attempted to show both their strong points and their weak points. No doubt I have also revealed some of my own in the process.

First: "Do What Thou Wilt"

Many thanks to reviewers: Lilinah Biti-Anat, Leigh Ann Hussey, Ramona Ruiz, Jeffrey Smith. All errors are the fault of Tim Maroney.

Channel 93 Navigational Image

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Mad Scientist Test

Sorry, I have not yet added the scoring.

1. How do you feel about headless cloning?

Evil tampering with the foundations of humanity

2. Should private citizens possess personal radio-thermal generators?

The safety risks are too great.

(If you wish, you may substitute picogram antimatter engines.)

3. What if physics created bombs with energies higher than the energies of nuclear explosives?

Such devices are inevitable.

3a. Bonus question: Name one good thing you could do with a super-atomic bomb.

4. Should people be infected with viruses that reprogram their DNA to generate consciously-controlled drug secretion glands?

Not my daughter you don't!

5. Could an ordinary person of flesh and blood theoretically become an energy creature,

attaining an entirely new order of being foreign to humanity and to life?

It is impossible to know.

http://maroney.org/About_Tim_Maroney.html

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But He Looks So Harmless!Maggie Fishell

My Resume

Big Mess o' Pictures

Fang Memorial Page

I'm a technical and user experience lead. I've worked on the Macintosh as a software engineer and interaction designer since 1984. Before the Mac I did UNIX programming and system administration. In the last few years I have become an Internet guru, working in languages such as DHTML, JavaScript, Java and perl.

My education extends well past elementary school. I have a bachelor's degree in Psychology and Mathematics from a state college that you have never heard of. I try to keep up my reading in psychology, and I hope to have a chance to go back to school in psychology and religious studies some day.

I have been a semi-professional writer since 1978, working mostly in computer networks but sometimes in commercial forms. I was a columnist for the award-winning *develo* magazine for a few years but I have not pursued technical writing since the magazine's staff was laid off. Currently I am editing a new series of books on H. P. Lovecraft's occult interests for Chaosium, with the first volume scheduled to appear around February 2000. The most useful information storage devices I use in my writing are books, made out of a pressed and treated wood pulp material. Computers are also useful on the back end of the process.

On my off hours I twist my body into yogic asanas, focus my mind on breathing practices and visualized images, read in esoteric and occult fields, perform rituals as a form of spiritual exercise, participate in computer mailing lists, engage in the enterprise of psychotherapy, receive weekly bodywork in the Breema tradition, travel as time permits, write at length and in glowing terms about myself on my web page, and do things it is best for you not to know about, lest the Hounds of Tindalos or Mrs. Grundy come a-calling in the night.

Here is an article from Dejanews that I found on a recent egotrawl. It will tell you everything else you need to know about me, except that I now dress casually in black jeans and a black t-shirt, and have let what is left of my hair go back to its natural color.

Subject: Re: Long live Computerworld !
From: mkellis@hal.COM (Michael Ellis)
Date: 1996/07/06
Message-ID: <4rnl5\$8ov@redcloud.hal.com>
Newsgroups:
alt.sysadmin.recovery,alt.internet.media-coverage,comp.unix.advocacy,comp.infosyste
ms.www.authoring.html

pdcauley@ftech.net (Piers Cawley) writes:

><war style=religious level="Chuq Von Rospach vs Tim Maroney (Was Re: RAH)[1]">
>YOU LIE!!!

>1: Does anyone else remember that flamewar?

Vaguely. Met Tim Maroney once. Very dapper gentleman. All black clothing, well tailored jacket and trousers, two tone haircut, goatee. Reminded me rather strongly of how I'd imagine Satan looks. He was, FWIW, very polite, erudite, and altogether the antithesis of his net.personality.

ObASR: our news machine is now back after being out for, *sigh*, a week. Don't ask.

Michael

--

Michael K. Ellis
mkellis@hal.com

UNIX System Administration Supervisor
HAL Computer Systems

"The conspiracy nuts have no use for comic relief killer lizards."

-- Stephan Zielinski

<http://maroney.org/Colophon.html>

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Colophon (with rants)

This web site is created on a Macintosh. I browse the Web (mostly using Internet Explorer), I bookmark places as I browse them, and then I arrange them into a coherent whole using BBEdit (thanks, Rich!) The editing work is done largely in coffee shops and bars on my PowerBook G3 (128MB RAM, 6GB disk, 400MHz G3, MacOS 9.0). I use an Apple Color OneScanner for image acquisition, and Adobe Photoshop and Graphic Converter for image editing. From my source files I use a templating perl script to build the web pages. The pages you see are the output of that script, which I upload to my ISP (Mindspring) using Anarchie, either over a 56Kbaud modem or Ethernet to T-1 link, depending on where I am.

I code a number of interactive behaviors in JavaScript, particularly the site preferences. Click [here](#) to see my JavaScript rant. I then test them on several different browsers (Mac and Windows versions of Navigator 4 and Explorer 4 and 5, as well as iCab on the Mac and Opera on Windows). The scripts sense the browser version and disable themselves on untested browsers.

Since moving to Mindspring from the horrible Sirius, I have gained the magical ability to create CGI scripts, which are programs that put out web pages dynamically. I have been creating them using the programming language named "perl." Click [here](#) to see my perl rant. I started by taking the guest book and message board scripts from Matt's Script Archive and tailoring them to my own purposes. (I have since dropped the message board due to high maintenance costs and low traffic.) This adoption required major changes, because I use a templated web page approach, and Matt's scripts put out HTML directly. That just wouldn't work in a template environment. Also, I have been an interface designer for sixteen years and I had a few leetle concerns about some of the interaction in the scripts.

After getting these scripts more or less working, I wrote an original CGI script to handle errors and fix up broken URLs. Finally, I took the AppleScript and 'osax' I had written at Apple to template web pages and translated them to perl. Two years later, in early 2000, I changed this build script to build web pages on request at the server rather than to build them on my system before uploading. This enables me to create more dynamic content, and to put out different pages in different contexts. In particular I serve up simplified pages on unsupported browsers, and serve up printer-friendly pages when

you ask for them. Both of these functions are accomplished by using a different template.

Confused? Well, maybe these pictures will help. Here is an illustration of how pages get from me to you in the grand scheme of things.

That's what we call a ten-thousand-foot view. How do I actually merge the raw HTML files that I work with into the HTML template files? I'm glad you asked! The figure below is a simplified view of the normal case. You can work out the cases for unsupported browsers and printer-friendly pages yourself.

The search engine I use is [ht://Dig](http://Dig), also known as htdig. This is a fine freeware product that Mindspring has already set up for its users, so it was trivial for me to install. htdig is remarkably good, especially for academic freeware.

Tim's Perl Scripts

Want to see my scripts? Sure, why not? They're not well commented now, but feel free to browse, and apply the five-finger discount as much as you like.

Note: These scripts are returned using the MIME type `text/plain`. Some browsers are not set up to handle this type, such as Mac Internet Explorer 4.0 (which is generally a highly buggy browser). Sorry about that; you'll have to use a browser that doesn't have this problem.

`Templatize.pl` - This is the script I use to build my web pages from templates on the MindSpring servers. It is triggered by the `.htaccess` files in my directories, which bind `text/html` requests to this script. Surprisingly, it has not hurt my load times! Bandwidth predominates over computation in this setup.

`printerpage.pl` - This script generates printer-friendly pages by invoking the templatizer with a special stripped-down template. It uses the `HTTP_REFERER` environment variable, which browsers send when they make HTTP requests to inform the server where a link came from.

`emailpage.pl`, `sendemailpage.pl` - This pair of scripts implements the "Email page to a friend" feature. It also relies on `HTTP_REFERER`. The form for the send page is templated by invoking the templatizer with some macros, and then the send button press is processed by invoking the UNIX `sendmail` program. The confirmation page is once again templated with some macros to tell the user what happened.

`FileNotFound.pl` - I use this to try to correct errors in URLs. In particular it makes UNIX

case-insensitive! Yay! One thing it still needs to do is log errors, though.

ServerError.pl - This fairly useless script intercepts server errors while running CGIs and does a half-friendly error dump. I haven't worked on getting STDERR redirected into it yet, but boy, that would sure make my life easier. It is useful when invoked directly because it dumps all the environment variables.

ShowScript.pl - This is the script I use for showing my scripts to you, my devoted colophonic reader. The maroney.org/scripts directory is actually empty, but it contains an Apache server directive file (".htaccess") that re-routes file not found errors to ShowScript.pl. ShowScript then gets the named script out of my cgi-bin and dumps it as text. Yeah, sure, it's a security hole -- like this site really has a lot of valuable stuff I don't want you figuring out.

myguestbook.pl - My hacked version of Matt Wright's Guest Book.

HTMLRetriever.pl - A slightly evil but very useful script I wrote to get web pages and make them look like they came from my web page so I can run them in frames and do other clever things with them.

Build.pl - This is the script I once used on my Mac to build my web pages from templates. It won't run from the server so don't try. I looked at a few other template systems in perl but they didn't let me author in standard HTML, so I wrote my own. This became the templatizer, above, and is no longer maintained in this form.

The Future at the Villa

scoring for the Mad Scientist Test

error logging

automated dead link detection

searching

fix the htdig problem where it puts out hi-byte chars instead of HTML special chars

set the popups in the refine search page to what they were in the original search

cookies for persistent search settings

themes

a customizable theme

Crowley themes

sonic themes

perl

use strict on all perl scripts

document the scripts better

frames

break out of others' frames

JavaScript

an explanation of my JavaScript usage

an easy way to look at my JavaScripts

Once I thought that the next frontier would be Java. Click [here](#) to see my Java rant. Java

replaces CGIs with what are called "servlets", programs written in Java that put out HTML code dynamically much as perl scripts do now. Java is a far cooler language than perl, and perl's text manipulation capabilities can be provided more comprehensively by Java classes. Unfortunately the promise of Java has not yet been realized, due to mistakes by Sun Microsystems, which is not a software company and has so far failed to become one. Server-side Java has been dropped by my ISP and so I have gone back to unlovely, powerful, pervasive perl.

Tim's JavaScript Rant

JavaScript is a poorly designed C-like scripting language that allows a minimal amount of direct interactivity.

Rant the First: Compatibility

The biggest headache with JavaScript is browser compatibility. Every version of every browser implements JavaScript differently and I have sometimes spent days simply trying to get code that works on three out of the four browsers in my test suite to work on the fourth. And never mind old browser versions; if I wanted to run on Navigator 3 or Explorer 3, that would mean doubling the effort from the already unmaintainable level.

This hideous compatibility matrix means that JavaScript coding is actually harder than C or C++ coding. I have written trap-patching extensions that were easier to write and maintain than basic JavaScripts. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I thought a "scripting" language was supposed to be easier than a "programming" language.

The language and object model desperately need a formal validation suite of the kind created for Ada way back in the 1980's; that's the only way out of the browser compatibility mess; but Netscape doesn't really have a clue about software methodology and they're doing nothing to create such a suite. Microsoft wouldn't pay any attention to it even if they did create one. Witness their attempts to do an end-run around their Java compatibility obligations - one of the main reasons for browser incompatibilities is that Microsoft wants to be incompatible, because you can only win in a competitive situation, not a cooperative one.

Rant the Second: Language Design

User interface code should be written in a specification-driven style rather than an executional one, but rather than try for the same cognitive leap that made HTML possible, the JavaScript designers went for a free-for-all executional approach. Suddenly web page design is back in the programmers' hands instead of the designers'.

In fact, there is a step backwards even where HTML is concerned. Rather than being able to statically specify behaviors in HTML and modify the specifications as required, you have to put out HTML directly. Forget about using a WYSIWYG tool for development. Consider my navigation table, at the top left of every page. The recommended way of generating such a thing is with a long list of JavaScript "document.write" commands! What a maintenance nightmare! Using an authoring tool, I could never preview it or play around with it, and if something broke due to an extra

quote mark or some such silliness, it would become a programming task instead of a design task to figure out the problem. HTML is cool. Printing out HTML directly from programming statements is evil. The slightest consideration for authoring environments would have led to a template-based approach, where one embeds normal HTML sections containing mutable sites that can be changed dynamically from a script; or, switching to a specification-driven approach, mutable sites that are embedded in a conditional property structure.

Rant the Third: Usability

Execution vs. specification aside, the new generation of user interfaces is inferior to the old. The document object model doesn't let you achieve a standard GUI level of friendliness. For instance, you can't warn the user when they are about to throw away form data when submitting it, because although you can intercept onUnload, not every browser will let you cancel it - and if you could, then the free-for-all approach would let evil webmasters keep you from leaving their sites. In addition, you can't save work in progress as protection against browser crashes (which happen several times a day for me on both Mac and Windows, thanks to low quality standards at Netscape and Microsoft), network outages, power failures, etc.

Another evil feature created by the wide-open executional approach is console windows, those awful little advertisements that evil webmasters keep popping up in your face. New windows must be constrained to direct user requests, which would be easy to do in a specificational language. But nooooo. This restriction could even be implemented executionally, by only allowing new windows to be created within onClick handlers. Will Netscape do this? Guess what - they think consoles are cool. They even pop them up on their own site.

The GUI feature set also lacks little niceties like disabling buttons that don't apply; using pull-down menus; controls like sliders and scroll bars; alerts with variable buttons; printing; and so on. It is virtually impossible to achieve a standard GUI level of usability with these ridiculous tools.

Rant the Final: Conclusion

The overview is that even if the problems get fixed, we'll still have a nightmare dealing with older browsers; and neither Netscape nor Microsoft are showing any signs of fixing the usability or development problems. Things will get worse before they get better, and may not get better. They certainly won't get good, though - that would be impossible with this language design.

Tim's Perl Rant

Perl must be one of the worst-designed, most powerful languages ever created. It was designed by tossing the weird syntax from every UNIX utility together into a C-like scripting language, but it is far more obscure than C. One can imagine Larry Wall's thought process as he created the syntax -- "Hey! I haven't used ampersand-tilde-hyphen yet! Now what could that stand for?"

Its syntax breeds errors just as a beautiful devil of Italy breeds lust. I spent days struggling with the difference between \$ and @, a distinction that actually has no reason to exist, but of which even experienced perl programmers often run afoul. This is only one of many clever little mishaps that the language design constantly encourages.

Unlike client-side languages, perl is relatively testable. It only has to run on one system, the server, so there's no compatibility matrix; and you can usually test it on your local system anyway, since all perl implementations are derived from a common reference implementation. (The one big exception to cross-platform compatibility is MacPerl, which doesn't implement a number of the system calls and foolishly thinks it can redefine the directory separator character. Many complex scripts require modification on the Mac due to these problems.) Unfortunately, running on the server means a major usability and performance gap. A CGI can only put out whole HTML pages, so something like a confirm dialog becomes slow and doesn't look like a dialog.

However, perl really is tremendously potent at text processing, which makes it indispensable for putting out HTML, the textual language lurking behind the surface of the World Wide Web. (If you've never selected "view source" in your browser, try it now. Don't be scared - look at it closely.) Most perl scripts you will find use the direct HTML output approach criticized in the JavaScript rant, but the language actually makes it quite easy to use template pages and replace the mutable sites, unlike JavaScript.

Tim's Java Rant

Java is not ready for prime time yet as a direct user interface delivery system.

The Java systems that come with the browsers are unreliable and inconsistent, making for a compatibility matrix even worse than the JavaScript matrix (see JavaScript rant). And this is supposed to be the "write once, run anywhere" language! Sun is relatively clueless when it comes to software methodology and has not solved the challenges of "write once, run anywhere".

The applet code delivery mechanism is inefficient, causing big delays for all but the smallest applets. People who tried to write networked enterprise software in Java found this one out the hard way. Did you ever try to download the monstrous Corel Office prototype, before they realized it had to be put out of its misery?

Finally, the Abstract Windows Toolkit (AWT), the user interface layer for Java, is horrible spoodge by UNIX programmers who thought that user friendliness was a sign of inferior intelligence. It is impossible to write good user interface code in the AWT, and that's the way, uh-huh uh-huh, they like it, yeah.

The usability failings of AWT will change soon with the release of Java Foundation Classes (JFC), the new user interface layer, which is as cool as AWT is crappy. However, it'll be some time before Netscape and Microsoft get their quality act together and ship reliable and consistent Java systems, and even then applets will still be a performance bottleneck.

http://maroney.org/People_Links.html

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Herb Gambill
Doctress Neutopia - also known as Libby Hubbard
vroooooom VROOOOOOOOOOMMM!! - and some of her detractors
Other People I Know Who Have Cool Pages
Turtle Song All The Way Down - David DeMaris
Total Strangers
everyman's daughter splashpage
Brazen Hussies
castboy's Unofficial Guide to Hollywood Babylon
drue miller . drowning in the wordpond
CamWorld: How Cameron Got Screwed
www.sexychuck.com
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The Advanced Book Exchange Home Page

Phanes Press

Publishers

Chaosium

SUNY Press - best source for scholarly books on occultism

Teitan Press, Publisher of Aleister Crowley

Feral House Press

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The On-line Books Page

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Project Bartleby Archive

Literature

Art.Net Links: Literature References

The University of Virginia Electronic Text Library

Index of /ftp.items/Library

Alex: A Catalog of Electronic Texts on the Internet

University of Virginia: English Electronic Texts Resources

Books In Progress

The English Server

Great Books Index - List of Titles

French Literature on the Web

The Scholes Library Electronic Reference Desk

Auteurs

Religious and Sacred Texts

ORB--Online Reference Book for Medieval Studies

EHN's Reading List - online texts

Literature of the Fantastic - online texts

Magazines

Gnosis

Alexandria
The Nation
The MoJo Wire--Interactive Exposés and Politics - aka Mother Jones
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I use these links on a daily basis. Or at least, it always seems to be a day when I do. Or a night, but that's the night of a day. You know what I mean.

[News](#)

[San Jose Mercury News \(Breaking News\)](#)

[New York Times \(AP Online News Index\)](#)

San Francisco Chronicle
BBC News: WORLD, SCI/TECH
Computers
SiliconValley.com (Good Morning Silicon Valley) - SJ Mercury's computer news
Slashdot: News for Nerds. Stuff that Matters.
NEWS.COM - the CNet computer news service - the best
I, Cringely
TechWeb (News)
ZDNet
LAN Times Online
Computerworld
Stocks
Yahoo! Finance - some stocks I watch
Schwab Discount Brokerage
Humor, Vitreous and Otherwise
Suck: Daily
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Dilbert
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Welcome to My Little Piece of Whatever

It's good to have you here at the Villa of the Mysteries at maroney.org. Please use the links column at the edge of each page to navigate.

This site is a resource for students and practitioners of esoteric spirituality, whether they share my beliefs or not. I am a pluralist and my best friends have often been those with whom I most disagree.

Although I am a skeptic, and I do not believe in such things as astrology, reincarnation, God, the spirit world, psychic powers, magic spells, archetypes, and the afterlife, I have long cultivated an interest in alternative religion and other imaginative traditions. My interest is both speculative and operative. As well as reading, thinking and writing about these subjects from a scholarly perspective, I also practice yoga and meditative rituals intended to strengthen and balance my mind and spirit.

My approach to mystical experience is based on phenomenology, a psychological paradigm that treats mental phenomena as real on their own plane without concern for their external truth or falsehood. While I do not think that anything in the objective world is sacred in itself, I recognize and honor the mental process that attaches the human category of sacredness to phenomena. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder but it is there.

What's New

Essays by Tim Maroney - Two new essays: Parts 3 and 4 of "The Included Middle", posted here July 28, 2001.

A Letter to Close - A skeptical analysis of Crowley's "An Open Letter to Those Who Would Join the Order".

The Freedom of Doubt - An essay on the classical skepticism of Sextus Empiricus and how it relates to various forms of skepticism in religious and mystical traditions, including a critical look at Crowley's claims of skepticism.

The Book of Dzyan. - (March 7, 2000) My new book has arrived!

Essays by Tim Maroney - Now with two new essays! (Parts 1 and 2 of "The Included Middle", posted here January 2000.) See the broad and confusing scope of my thought about religious and occult matters from my early twenties through my current state of decrepitude! Wonder why people got so damned upset about such dry, academic nonsense! Marvel at the sheer arrogance and excellence of my answers to unanswerable questions!

<https://www.geocities.com/kundal/>

40 captures

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2007 2009 2010

About this capture

Astrum_Adamas LiveJournal

DIAMONDSTAR418

is a Thelemic webpage dedicated to the propagation of Love, Light, Life and Liberation for the benefit of all sentient beings

Queen of Heaven Clerk House

Artwork by Patrick McCaffrey (C)
Cornelius93.com

HERU RA HA SANGHA

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http://www.geocities.com/kundal/Heru_Ra_Ha_Sangha.html

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HERU RA HA SANGHA

Golden Topaz of Radiant Light

A.'.O.'.M TEMPLE

Golden Mandala of Radiant Light

The Heru Ra Ha Sangha is a Thelemic Buddhist Sangha whose Work is the eclectic amalgamation of Thelema and Vajrayana Buddhism. Its purpose is to provide an avenue of exploration for the methods and techniques of Vajrayana while utilizing the ethos and mythos of Thelema as its model. The Heru Ra Sangha is open to all who are interested in these methods. The two PDFs below are examples of a Eucharistic Mass and Setting of the Wards using the five Wisdom Buddhas. Please feel inspired to create your own tools [rituals and practices] If you would like to share them via the Heru Ra Ha Sangha please forward them to e-mail on the homepage.

1

http://www.geocities.com/kundal/Links_of_LVX.html

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R.R et A.C.

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RED FLAME
~ A THELEMIC RESEARCH SITE ~

This website is about Grady Louis McMurtry's branch of the
ARGENTIUM ASTRUM

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. - AL I:40

Frater Hymenaeus Alpha 777 (1918-1985)

Click [HERE](#) to enter.

~ MAILING ADDRESS ~
Gerald Edward Cornelius
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Berkeley, CA 94704-4366
EMAIL: Cornelius93@aol.com

Love is the law, love under Will. - AL I:57

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ABOUT US

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. - AL I:40

It has always been the policy of Grany McMurtry's A.'.A.'. to never to shy away from a subject simply because the over-all theme might bathe itself in a heated debate or might be ruffling a few feathers. The material we are releasing on this site is not what is typical to other branches. First and most important, before we can continue, I must state categorically right-up-front that we are not releasing this information in order to seek students. In truth, although we have students worldwide, we are a semi-closed branch of the Order and are very selective. We're also not trying to convert anyone to our way of thinking. Releasing this information is merely meant to continue Aleister Crowley's policy of offering material which is primarily thought provoking. We feel the New Aeon is far too young for any one group, ourselves included, to claim Divine Guidance for humanity as a whole to follow. We are simply releasing our information for the reader to contemplate and consider the possibilities of another approach up the sacred mountain.

We release this information at this time because of the recent craze in establishing pseudo-branches of different ten-degree or Qabalistic systems worldwide, both as inner and outer schools. We feel the ties to the Old Aeon are still very strong and are drawing some individuals to look backwards rather than forwards when establishing their organizations. We tend to forget that our Holy Book tells us, "Abrogate are all rituals, all ordeals, all words and signs." (AL I:49) We want the reader to think about their approach rather than simply follow previously tried or well-worn paths. We want to show how we have dared to be different by looking to Liber AL vel Legis for solutions. As an example of where we have gone, consider this quote from one of the articles included in these pages:

On this website we will openly examine the noble Order of the AA which is often webbed in contradictions depending upon the literature of the branch which you're reading. It seems that it is difficult for some individuals to grasp the nature of the Inner School or Third Order wherein the Holy of Holies resides. Many people assume that by taking initiation into any given branch of Crowley's AA they have automatically entered this ancient Order and that all the literature which they've read pertains specifically to them. They fail to realize that they have merely joined one of many outer vehicles which disseminate portions of the Inner School Wisdom as a means of guiding humanity forward toward spiritual self realization. According to magickal tradition, the Qabalistic Tree of Life is divided into three mystery schools. The First and the Second Orders of the AA are respectively called the GD and the RC. These Orders are what Aleister Crowley and George C. Jones founded around 1906 in their determination to create a new fraternity. These Orders are not, as some would have you believe, an ancient fraternity which has been around for centuries. They are simply a modern rendition on old themes, teaching what these two gentleman thought appropriate for the times. The Inner School or Third Order known as SS has always existed. Aleister Crowley did not create this Order. It is the real AA. Most of Crowley's literature about the nature of this Order state that it is as old as the hills, very noble and worthy of aspiration. However, it is never able to fully manifest into the First Order. The most to be hoped for upon Earth is a glimmering of its Light.

In truth, most AA literature is often confusing. It is difficult to ascertain whether Crowley is referring to the Third Order, the lower two Orders or the entire Tree of Life structure as a whole. This is where many individuals often get befuddled because they are usually unaware of the subtle differences. They read every scrap of paper regarding the AA and lump the writings of the three Orders into one. They fail to understand the needs of each Order in relationship to where each resides on the Tree of Life. You cannot hold one Order by the standards of the other. Many individuals also do not comprehend that a person who claims a degree above Malkuth is not always 'within' that degree every moment of their waking day but rather is capable of being within the sphere epitomized by that degree. There is a big difference. No matter how high we climb on Mount Abiegnus, we still have a foot planted on Malkuth and we must deal with things appropriately thereon without crossing the planes. Often I read people criticizing Aleister Crowley's, Jack Parsons' or Grady McMurtry's mundane life to imply that their attainments were false. This only portrays their own lack of understanding of the planes by judging the attainments of other spheres according to one's every action upon Malkuth.

The first major question which needs to be addressed is whether or not Aleister Crowley had the authority to create the two lower Orders. We believe, in all honesty, that he did, due to the degree which he held as a Magister Templi 8=3 and thereby acting from the Third Order.

One Star in Sight clearly states that members of the Third Order "are each entitled to found Orders dependent on themselves on the lines of the R. C. and G. D. orders, to cover types of emancipation and illumination not contemplated by the original (or main) system. All such orders must, however, be constituted in harmony with the AA as regards the essential principles." In other words, Aleister Crowley acknowledges the source of his own authority which enabled him to begin the First and Second Orders of his AA. He is telling us that by residing in the Third Order one has the right to establish Foundations below the Abyss.

We also want to point out that, according to Aleister Crowley's own writings, anyone who legitimately resides in the Third Order has the right to establish First and Second Orders which disseminate thought that is not necessarily taught in other branches. This is how we, Grady's lineage, get our authority to create or bring to birth new ideas. Does it make our teachings better than others? Not really. Thelemically we're just offering a concept which others do not teach. End of the subject.

We hope what we have released on this site will be read by everyone with an open mind. However, I am always amazed and find it very strange that Thelemites of all people, who supposedly accept diversity on all planes, will yell the loudest when people believe differently than themselves. Simply discussing certain subjects, like we're doing on this website, will bring pseudo-authorities out of the wood work like roaches to throw their two-cents around as to what the Order is 'really' all about. I have never understood this Thelemic need to preach the 'correct way' when it's obvious that there can be no one way which is correct for all humanity.

Love is the law, love under will. - AL I:57

APPLYING FOR MEMBERSHIP

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law – AL I:40

It is with much regret that we must inform everyone that we are not accepting students at this time; this is due to the fact that unlike other branches of our Order, we do not take on students unless we have an immediate teacher available who can offer a student his or her undivided attention.

Love is the law, love under will. – AL I:57

Frater U.

93

"One of the major differences in our branch of the AA compared to others is that they use ten grades, often called initiations, based upon the Tree of Life while the three mentioned in AL I:40 are merely peripheral sub-titles or divisions given to the ten. We reversed this concept. We have only three grades, the Hermit, the Lover and the man of Earth, which we do not consider initiations since Liber AL vel Legis doesn't call them such. We acknowledge the possibility that these could correlate to the Tree, since everything does, but the latter is only a convenient filing system of self and are not grades in themselves. We feel the old system puts the cart before the horse. Let's be honest. The fact is, according to Liber AL vel Legis, being a Thelemite encompasses only 'three grades' and not the ten upon which many fraternities are based. Our most Holy Book clearly states, "Who calls us Thelemites will do no wrong, if he look but close into the word. For there are therein Three Grades, the Hermit, and the Lover, and the man of Earth." (AL I:40) This line is not followed by "and you must correlate these to the ten degree Tree of Life systems used in the old Aeon."

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Builders of the Adytum is a modern Mystery School.

Adytum is the Greek word for Inner Shrine or Holy of Holies. Like Jesus, who many believe was trained in Qabalah, members of the Order aspire to build the Inner Temple, to construct the Holy of Holies within. People of all faiths are welcome to study the teachings of this Order. B.O.T.A. recognizes Qabalah as the root of Judaism and Christianity. Its ultimate purpose is to hasten the true Brotherhood of mankind and to make manifest the truth that love is the only real power in the universe.

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C.O.T. Lamén

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Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law

Welcome to the home page of the College of Thelema and Temple of Thelema, a California Non-Profit Religious organization.

Founded in service to the A∴A∴, the College of Thelema seeks to guide the student to an understanding of the Law of Thelema. Most especially, this means a deeper understanding of oneself and of one's True Will. A combination of instruction techniques is employed, including seminars, written texts, and individual work. For over twenty years, the College of Thelema has published the journals *In the Continuum* (1973-1996) and *Black Pearl* (1997-2003), maintaining high standards in Thelemic education.

The Temple of Thelema is a true Outer Order of the Greater Mysteries, providing ceremonial initiation; coordinated and structured training; and regular group work, all in conformity with the principles of The Book of the Law. An investment of time, effort, and commitment is expected from each member. Each is expected to aspire fervently to the Great Work; to dare, with courage undaunted, to perfect that Work; and ever to apply his or her best effort to effect Harmony within the Order, and within the world in general.

Announcements

Temple of Thelema hosts online forums at HeruRaHa.net. Create a profile and join in on the myriad discussions related to Thelemic magick & mysticism.

IT'S BACK! College of Thelema is pleased to announce that the best-selling book The Mystical & Magical System of the A.'.A.'. The Spiritual System of Aleister Crowley & George Cecil Jones Step-by-Step is back in print and now available. Copies may be ordered in the immediate future through Amazon.com, where reader reviews can still be found of the prior printing. This beautiful hard-cover volume, manufactured to the highest standards, retails for \$49 (compared to prices in excess of \$2,000 for used copies online).

We are very pleased to announce that back issues of the College's long-running journal, In the Continuum, are once again available.

Love is the law, love under will.

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U.S. Grand Lodge, Ordo Templi Orientis

Peace, Tolerance, Truth:
Salutation on All Points of the Triangle;
Respect to the Order.

To all whom it may concern: Greeting and Health.

Hadit

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

The letters O.T.O. stand for Ordo Templi Orientis, the Order of Oriental Templars, or Order of the Temple of the East. O.T.O. is dedicated to the high purpose of securing the Liberty of the Individual and his or her advancement in Light, Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, and Power through Beauty, Courage, and Wit, on the Foundation of Universal Brotherhood.

U.S. Grand Lodge is the governing body of O.T.O. in the United States. It is the most populous and active branch of O.T.O., with 44 local bodies in 26 states as of October 2009.

If you are interested in becoming a member of Ordo Templi Orientis, see the membership page for more information. To find an O.T.O. body near you, consult our list of local bodies. Our FAQ answers many common questions about O.T.O. and Thelema. If you need further assistance, please write to the webmaster.

Success is your proof;
courage is your armour;
go on, go on, in my strength;
& ye shall turn not back for any!
— Liber AL III:46

Colors from the Stele
What's New
September 2, 2009

USGL events calendar

A calendar of U.S.G.L. events of national and regional interest is now available. Users of Google Calendar can overlay this calendar on their personal calendars.
August 19, 2009

Kaaba is coming to Indiana

The next session of Kaaba Colloquium, the U.S. Grand Lodge leadership training program, will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana over the weekend of September 26-27 2009. Kaaba is open to all O.T.O. members of at least I°, and is especially useful for current and prospective local body officers. Register today!
August 6, 2009

USGL 2008 annual report released

U.S. Grand Lodge has released its annual report for Anno IVxvi (fiscal year 2008).
Current and past annual reports are available on the reports page.
July 27, 2009

Thelema NOW! podcast launched

U.S. Grand Lodge is very pleased to announce the launch of Thelema NOW!, a monthly podcast on Aleister Crowley, ritual, and magick. The first installment features an interview with Jim Wasserman, author of *The Secrets of Masonic Washington* and *Secret Societies: Illuminati, Freemasons, and the French Revolution*. He speaks with host Frater Puck about what it means to be a true American. We maintain an archive of older news items.

Love is the law, love under will.

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About this capture

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Nath

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We are the first generation of western Naths. In life we often stick apart, here we can come together in virtual space to create our new world.

The tale of the Indian Naths stretches back a thousand years and more, a story full of saints, miracles, Kings and fools. In India today many Naths are either in jail, or worse, in politics. Mahendranath, the English saint and hermit, spent his life in India as a naked Nath. He sought and found many of the essential concepts that sustained the Naths through the millennia. He wrote tantras and poems and stories to convey what he had discovered to the western world. He was called Paramahansa, the Great Swan, because he was able to extract the milk of pure intelligence and leave behind the water of cultural usage and local context. This site is dedicated to Mahendranath. It is also dedicated to that water in which the knowledge held by the Naths can flower again.

EVEN MORE BASIC FUNDAMENTALS

March 20th, 2006

I have written this for Aditya. I believe it addresses some of his concerns.

I never say this enough. Thank you Aditya. You have the great ability to get me angry. I work very hard at extracting the energy and fire of my anger and using it for creative purposes. I still get amateurish splatters on my work, anger spillage, but I try to clean up carefully before calling it a done job. Mahendranath was very skilled at using anger creatively.

What is the point of belonging to a group such as the naths? The first job is to heal and develop one's personal psychology. We will never be perfect, but we can become functional. At least psychosis is reduced to mild neurosis, one has become alert to the workings and machinations of one's ego and one is determined to get on with one's life plan. I don't believe this work can be achieved alone. The very first work of the guru/chela relationship is to reduce and become aware of ego but, lacking competent gurus, we must continually be tossed and turned in the polishing vat, knocking off each others rough edges. First we learn how to manage our own selves, so that we are able to proceed with the very long and difficult work of becoming god. Becoming ego-identified with a guru or cult is delusional. It is a klesha. We are working towards the ability to bear the pure light, no relative concept to rest on, no theory to depend on, complete non-identification. We are supposedly training ourselves to walk naked in the void (or plenum).

We must challenge each other, often and thoughtfully. Scoring points is ego work. Inducing wisdom in a fool is good work. We are all fools, but let's work to help each other see what is so difficult to see. The nose on my face, that which is too close to be visible to me is the proper target for attacks, jeers, gentle pointers. (hahaha my nose is an easy target) The more outrage I feel the more likely the shot has been accurate. (Now that is a useful piece of info if you don't already know it). Lashing out at one who has just helped you is neurotic and an immediate signal that work needs to be done. We must become functional on these basic psychological levels before we can proceed to the esoteric heights. Know your ego! It is trickier than any magical spell or spirit in the night. It will hold us back more than any lack of intellect, or knowledge or definition, lore or history.

Due to our lack of experienced gurus I propose we take a page out of modern times. Let's get commercial and hire the specific folks that we need. Counsellors and shrinks for our psychological development, Monroe Institute for the technology for astral travel, the Buddhists to develop our meditation skills, various shamans to hone our magical abilities, gypsies for fortune telling and small charms, Gurdjieffians to keep our self-pacifying to a minimum, yogis to teach us relaxation and clean living, and let's get some good musicians in to improve the drumming!

PART 2

Now I wish to discuss basic questions about Naths and our relationship to that name. The Naths in India are ancient and well-known today. They are a large and well-established cult. I know almost nothing about this group. The nath name arrived in the west as an idea of Mahendranath. At first it seemed we were to call ourselves Adinaths but Mahendranath turned against that idea. Mahendranath repeatedly stated that we are not related to the Naths in India because we are not sannyasi. He did not want us to adopt their ideas and practices wholesale. He had already done the sifting and choosing of ideas he considered the true gold embedded in the dross. His claim to being the last Adi Nath was not ego aggrandizement. It was made to reinforce the fact that although we carry the nath name we are not related to the Indian Naths. We honour and receive inspiration from them and their wonderful history by using the Nath name.

We have a core of ideas, which came mostly through Mahendranath, which define us. We cybernath together in order to discuss and develop and experiment and re-define and experience in our own lives the effect of these ideas. Many of the activities of ANS for instance seem to originate far from the original writings. This is an ideal situation for experimentation, testing, research and just plain craziness and excess that provide the rich compost for new understanding to bloom. INO preserves the words of Mahendranath's writings and presents them, accurately (mostly) and beautifully to the public through the internet. As a member of both these groups I delight in this complementary pair. Very Yin/Yang, Siva/Shakti, Creator/preserver/ destroyer yet to come.

In theory, initiation into the hierarchical, initiatic cult of INO is a deep commitment between guru and chela to work together to achieve god-hood and liberation. This is the classical guru chela relationship which is spelled out very clearly throughout Hindu and Buddhist tradition. This is the ancient tradition, transfer of power and information, a spiritual birth. Initiation into ANS has been offered in a very different spirit. Initiation into ANS is a lucky charm, an indication of interest, a coyote-kiss, a toy, a courtesy. A few of those who have received initiation into this deeply serious, happy-go-lucky nath manifestation have had a reaction of deep spiritual opening. These few have the karmas and I wish them well. You have made a very good start.

I like the liberating term neo-naths. I have used many Indian forms, words, ideas and imagery in the things I have written. I have indulged my own mystical feelings about nath and my personal belief systems abundantly and repeatedly. I must state, that does not make these things objectively, measurably, true. When I describe the Nine Naths as living Beings ... this may or may not be taken as objectively true. Readers choose at that moment. This style of writing is meant to be useful on an emotional level. It is part of my toolkit, using my imagination to augment and accelerate the effectiveness of an idea or a situation. Purposely superposing two non-converging ideas upon each other is a skill I am developing as a magician. Not only for flexibility which is crucial, but in order to function in accord with basic quantum principles. I have to live and think and eat these principles. Quantum realms are the magical realms of this age, in my opinion.

Thus, we are a group (or not) of western based spiritual pilgrims unconnected except

through Mahendranath with India in any way except a combination of letters that occurs in our name. On the other hand we may also be mystically bound to the ancient and magical cult of the Nine Naths and the mysterious and eternal Wanderers; Gorakshnath and Matsyendranath and Dattatreya who are the guardians of this cult. We fearlessly appropriate the name and do whatever we please with it because we are Naths and that is what we do. I wouldn't advise pushing the second option too publicly and not at all in India. However it is a splendid tool and should be kept brightly polished in order to propel us into the ancient halls of the nath enlightenment machine, an altered and heightened state of consciousness that is difficult to reach at the best of times. As neo-naths we appropriate these rights to ourselves without compromising the Naths in India in any way.

Hmmm that makes us a non-local entanglement with the Indian Naths, possibly affecting the situation in both directions of time. Nice. Thus by describing, measuring and observing ourselves we affect Indian Naths if only by the comparison between us and them.

The same ideas can be applied to Mahendranath himself. On the one hand he was an adventurous human among many who went into new and unexplored regions. He never returned but he left us with some good maps to find our own adventurous way. His writing is useful and specialized and the ideas are new to us, although they certainly came from Indian ancient sources and were filtered through Mahendranath's consciousness before arriving in our brains. What he did, we can all achieve because it is obviously within the realm of human abilities. I choose to believe that he is an enlightened being and still human, well within the grasp of human endeavour.

There is another wildly unrestrained view of the man. This is how we view our Gurus and heroes and love objects. This is the work of the devotee and devotion which is so full of magical potential as we act in bizarre and unlikely ways in order to fulfill our own idea of the demands of that devotion. We will sacrifice our time, our money, even our life and life energy and purpose in order to propitiate this Ideal Being. This is called BHAKTI. The inspiration and power to understand and learn that comes from that intense love and sympathy with an Ideal Being is enormous and well documented .. again a suitable realm for magicians. The transformative power of identification with a quite possibly non-existent Ideal should not be discarded in an argument over relative objective existence in a taxpaying world. The one view must not negate the other even if they are mutually exclusive.

Calling ourselves Adinaths, against Mahendranath's express wishes is a possibility. Since there is no proof of the existence of this panth beyond the assertions of a few people (like me, and I don't mind), we tread on few toes in appropriating this name. Aditya's proposal to call us Mahendranath sampradaya, despite my jeering is another possibility. I think he means panth though. Sampradaya is the entire cult. We wouldn't be naths, we would be mahendriastes or perhaps mahendriazzis. Are INO and ANS and AMOOKOS perhaps newly emerging panths? Much of this strikes me as premature. We are very new and young and haven't shown what we are capable of yet. First steps have not yet been taken in the most basic direction of evolving and training the SELF.

Is any of this useful in reconciling the schismatic tendencies of the western naths? Does any of this alleviate the anxieties of Aditya caused by my unkind merriment at his expense?

Part 3

I cribbed these facile definitions of difficult and obscure quantum physics from "Science" July 1st, 2005. This is the magazine of AAAS, the American Assoc. for Advancement of Science. I make no apologies for constantly encroaching on the territory of quantum science. No use to tell me this only applies to tiny objects, my ideas do not work, are non-scientific and I understand wrongly. I know that already. I am thinking, feeling and acting in a mystic state where "above and below", "micro and macro", the "visible and the invisible", the "true and the could-be" intersect in my head. This stuff actually works in my life. I believe it is the true operating theatre for 21st century magical investigation and experimentation. .. Unless you really are only in it for the love spells!

SUPERPOSITION; an object having 2 mutually exclusive properties at the same time .. until observed or disturbed, at which time the superposition collapses and the object is found to be in one or the other place.

NON-LOCALITY; "entangled" particles that are separated in space but not in time, they affect each other at any distance and may in theory become entangled at a time after they have been observed or measured.

UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE; objects' positions and momenta are "smeary and ill-defined". Gaining knowledge about one means losing knowledge about the other. Things aren't IS but, rather, probability waves that become real when observed or measured.

IMPROBABILITY: this definition never came up .. sorry .. it's my favourite idea of the whole lot.

Wow! what a 'plastic' malleable universe. What a thrill! How truly uncertain and improbable!

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Posted in General | 16 Comments »

Some Nath Fundamentals

March 13th, 2006

These are some nath fundamentals.

I think we can safely assume ourselves to be "Neo-naths" with little contact with the motherland of India. ANS uses two Nath guru lineages, Mahendranath and Gurunath. Although I have not read deeply into the Hamsa yoga of Gurunath, I suspect these are

two rather different viewpoints and procedures. Gurunath is from the ancient householder nath tradition and Mahendranath is sannyasi. The Adinath panth is quite unknown among modern naths in India and much research remains to be done on our origins.

This vagueness is quite liberating. We don't want to reproduce the dreadful fundamentalism of some indian Nath centers which are currently highly political and inappropriate.

In the 1924 book "Gorakshnath and the Kanphata Yogis" the naths of india are surveyed by the british and appear to be hindu and muslim and male and female in equal numbers. This is no longer true today. The great majority of women have fled to the astral planes and I doubt there are many actual muslim naths although I have met a wonderful Pirnath (Pir is a muslim title) who had a very Kabir like equanimity toward religion altogether.

Mahendranath despaired of western naths ever developing new patterns that respond to a new era and a new society. If he had lived a little longer he would have been pleased, I think. We have become cybernaths, joined together in a McLuhanesque global neural network, a mystical body of nath. Come to think of it the internet was born just as Mahendranath died in 1992. I visualize planetary magic timed and held together by the internet, but I am an old timer and I think the young naths will come up with many more far out and bizarre ideas and scenarios.

I want to discuss nath iconography and in this I borrow almost entirely from India and the past. We gather, practice and according to our own ideas we worship at the DHUNI. This is the firepit. I encourage all naths to spend long hours in front of the fire. There is a great deal of knowledge, insight and detachment to be gained from this practice. Develop our own system of approaching flame. Certainly make offerings of everything from sage and incense (samagri) to books, money and valued and sentimental objects. Such destruction and sweetness will lead naturally to our greatest sacrament which is ASH.

ASH is our most important substance. Naths smear our bodies in ash, cover our heads in ash, make our cult marks in ash, heal the sick with a pinch of ash which has been charged with energy. We use it as a vibe and energy collector and we mark time by the accumulation of mountains of ash created through endless ascetic practice and devotion to the care of the dhuni. For those of Hindu tendency it is a joining with the ultimate Adinath the ash-smearred god of the burning ground, the Great Lord Shiva himself. Ash speaks of the end of all things, of destruction of form, end to desire, karma, and the end of attachment. All things are eventually brought to the fire and reduced to the essence which is ash.

One emblem which we all share is the TRISHUL or trident, another sign of Shiva, of the outsider the transgressor of societal virtue, the left hand practitioner, the one who eats less, sleeps less, speaks rarely, desires little and owns nothing...the all powerful

magician who walks in darkness without fear and without baggage.

We are accompanied by the DAMERU, the double-headed drum with which we mark the heartbeat of passing time and of the stars which dance in that other sky which will appear to the exhausted seeker sitting by the fire. The drum (and it need not be dameru) is the first step in the ancient nath study of SABD, sound, both the outer sound of the planet roaring through the cosmic vastness and the inner sounds of bees and spirit voices singing, of intuition and insight found only in the inner temple of our awakened mind. We chant the MANTRAS of ancient days and modern days too, as offerings to the fire and as inquiry into the secrets of sound. We naths have our own mantras. Make efforts to seek them out.

We share the RUDRAKSHA bead with all Shaivites. It is the round seed of a certain tree and, when strung together, it is used as a MALA and as necklace, bracelets and can even be wrapped tightly around the trunk of the body to ensure one never sleeps soundly and comfy again. This is a good thing actually.... for a while.

All of this, firepit, ash, trident, drum and mantra, rudraksha and mala are outer signs of our inner work. Obviously we can let slip all these outer manifestations and still, through inner work, emerge as the new, the liberated, the enlightened, self-created Being.

But when and if we ever gather together again in a great international nath mela let our signs and symbols, our cult marks, our legends, our songs, drumbeats and mantras, our poems and above all our fires show that we are united in a great effort to transform ourselves and the world into a free and joyous home, a place worthy of incarnation and deep transformation. Potential fulfilled to the brim!
jai Nathji

PART TWO____

Mahendranath developed a group of core concepts that anyone could do well to read and understand. The three K's : Karmas are our starting point in life, the traits and personality that comes packaged with our body. The kleshas are the 5 obstructions; ego, ignorance, attachment, repulsion and clinging to life. Konditioning is the subtle, indeed barely detectable, forces with which we are tamed and how we become acceptable members of our society. These are negative forces affecting our ability to function properly.

Samarasa is a complex idea that in its simplest expression means sameness, we remain in a simple and balanced state, not driven by desire and disgust. Svecchachara means that we do our own will and once again are not driven by the forces of ego, society, civilisation and the teachings of our mothers and leaders. This leads to spontaneous and unconditioned response that can never fail to answer the needs of the moment. We will all be wrestling with these key ideas as long as we call ourselves naths.

These ideas are meant to lead us to enlightenment, to inner freedom and finally to the state of Being which we call the AVADHOOT. Descriptions of the Avadhoot are very important because there is no use striving for the undefined and unknown. We must have some picture of the goal. Finding a living example of such a being is the greatest blessing we can receive in this life. Please keep your minds and your mind's eye open! Such beings most definitely exist in every age and in many places. One thing of which we can be sure...nobody else has ever recognised this being. They will be strange, attractive, charming and magical as quarks and will probably be skirting jail and the nuthouse at all times. There will be no group of fans clinging to this disreputable scoundrel and one will very possibly be greeted by shit and lies and every form of dissimulation. How to distinguish this person from a madman or a jerk is up to your insight/intuition. Nobody can help you here. Nobody will ever confirm your choice as right or wrong. Good luck with this!

How, practically do we walk this path in the 21st century in this western civilisation? I really don't know. I know that in olden times in India the path was fairly well described. First the aspirant made vows in which they renounced family, accumulation, this world and the next. Then they devoted themselves and humbled themselves to a guru in whom they had complete faith. This guru would use any and all means to diminish the ego and the badly aimed drives of the student (and often try to make a profit too!). The student would use meditation, fasting, yoga, silence, prayer, solitude and renouncement as tools to entirely remake themselves. Knowing the ancient stories of saints and gods, they would strive to emulate these astonishing heroes of old. They would go on long, dangerous and difficult pilgrimage and take every opportunity to bathe in the waves of grace which emanate from all realized beings and even their graves, of any and all persuasions.

Again the ability to discriminate between one thing and another was key to success. Ultimately there is no predictor of success, there is no path which guarantees we will reach the goal. Nobody knows who, nobody knows how or why any being may attain enlightenment. The efforts made seem to stay with us to some degree and it is believed that the tiniest increments made over endless spans of lifetimes will eventually lead to heaven. Believe it if you must, but I suggest you make great wrenching efforts and plan to succeed now in this lifetime. We are all, every one of us, in our most nuclear form, enlightened and omniscient. We are starlight and yogis of great power. That may be the greatest key of all. If I could just get out of my own way... if I would just acknowledge my own divinity...listen to my own voice and follow myself on my own path... well its possible I may succeed. It could happen.

PART III

I am sitting at my computer watching photos drift by on the screen. They are my digital images of late summer and autumn leaves in the north. Mixed in with landscapes are photos of friends, some laughter, some anxiety, adventures. A years' worth of photos of people, places, trees, airports artworks sit on the hard-drive and cycle through endlessly. Because these images are painted with light they are hyper-real in

appearance and occasionally slip over into surreal, either through manipulation or by accident. They each represent a distinct link to my consciousness, to my unique viewpoint on this planet. After all I can only be in spot at once and nothing else can be in that spot at the same time. It is time and space making a nice graph of my life and each photo a point.

The music is a medley that I had put together for an acquaintance. Freddy Fender, TexMex music god, starts to sing about how things are for him out along the border. Suddenly the lyrics, the music, the images, all synchronize. When he sings about a shining path the perfect photo appears. When he sings about friends, my friends faces come on the screen. The image on the computer is framed by a blasting winter snowstorm outside the window.

I had just finished seeing a friend off. It had been an enlightening visit. I had captured some of the surface and some of the depths in photos. I loaded the woodstove, fed the birds, did the dishes then the laundry, swept the floor and finally sat back with that deeply self satisfied relaxation and sigh of contentment.

The combination of deeply content relaxation, dissonant visuals and synchronous music worked to launch me into a deeply altered consciousness. The images became an oracle, which spoke through the music. I had a reflecting, many-mirrored conversation with "myself" as expressed through self created links to other spots on my recent timeline. This unusual pattern is of course a product of tech and what I can do with it, or else what I can do to myself, using tech and virtuality to create strange roads along which I can walk..

Intensive creativity, repeatedly using imagery, sound, emotion, and time space soundbites are a useful toolset for altering consciousness. The new oracle is effective in a most tantric way. Self reflecting self, enjoying and confirming the inner temple with images from outside that are still self and of course digital self and rainbowlight self too. Ego, finding so much self must panic and sink through the cracks at least for a time. Long enough to get the message through to yourself from your self. On the other hand the music just comes from the radio.

Posted in General | 4 Comments »

THE MAGICAL WORKING OF OCT. '05

November 14th, 2005

There was a great magical working that took place in Chicago early in October '05. It was specifically done for the benefit of north america and also for the benefit of the naths of america. It was a cleansing of north american magical space. I cannot speak for the others involved. They may decide to write from their own viewpoints someday.

The origins of this working sprang from the heart of the magician at the center of the working. His joyous mystical vision inspired all that was to follow.

"I've passed through these mystical states off and on my entire meditation career, these waves of unbearably good news when the hope and joy and reality of the future just pours off me and all I can see of human life and human history is suffering annihilated by love and wisdom.

It's strong here in Chicago today. Listening to music from my early 20s, things I listened to when I was becoming a magician, seeing the illusion that life is random and fake shattered around my collective in Chicago, seeing the scope and the vision for building peace on earth, and not only Shanti but Ananda, heavenly bliss.

For a long time I have been a warrior without a heart, lost in the desert. And now my brothers and sisters come, blades clenched between their teeth, or in lieu of blades, roses, lovers and fighters and joyous magicians united in a movement which may be as legendary as any mystical revival.

The Naths have come to Chicago and the Mandala is rooted here. And I sit in it, a little left of center, holding my space and watching the Divine Plan unfurl.

It can and could be better than anyone can dream. We're wiser than our forebears and not a little smarter, better educated, better grounded and, above all, better protected. I've seen Dharma Protectors from half a dozen lineages forming circles around our work, dividing up the labor of protecting this crystal from which a world could grow. We won't blow it: I've seen too many here who know how to live, and how to die, to preserve what is holy. And when enough brothers and sisters stand side by side, we do not have to die to win, we do not have to die to preserve life. Each part of the job can be managed without undue suffering and sacrifice.

As my mother said "many hands make light work."

Wherever you are, this blessing is carried to you, not from me, even from us, but from Lalita, the Goddess herself who is beginning to show her face around here, and the radiance of her smile blinds us to all pain. Om"

After this vision he stated his intent. It was focussed and personal and aggressively attacked a corrupting and alien occult formulation which was in opposition to the kulas aims and human welfare. This intent could be understood by others on many levels starting with the intimate psychological need to confront the source of dark childhood fears. These fears are a response to the actual abusive, brutal and terrifying forces and events that shape many children into adult members of society. The terrors of

childhood, though forgotten and dismissed, easily provide the powerful energy needed for magic work. Suppressed sensations of terror are easily extended into the mythological world, where we combat alien demons and the dark spirits of our imagination. At the same time these demons and spirits are as real and as manifest as anything else in the material world. The intent is to make room for life and growth and the enjoyment of happiness and fearlessness in the world of here and now.

This message of intent was sent out to nath internet community sites. I responded with delight and excitement mixed with fear. I felt such pleasure from the truthful words of a heart in mystic communion with itself and the group. My personal response was to build a protective circle around the magicians who would do the actual work. The forces they must encounter were known to be dangerous and powerful. The potential for 'blowback' was great. My own fears were drawn in the very forms they were about to engage in battle.

I saw potential for re-uniting some of the fractured elements of the nath community. I called on those with whom I had previously done magical work to join me in forming a protective shield around our magicians. Rather than feeling disheartened by the at best petty and at worst zero responses from these naths, I decided that the work being done by the Chicago mages would clear the way for american naths to function as a continental kula of magicians. The 'immune system' of american culture had certainly left me unable to work for a long time. It was only when the magician at the center of this working magically removed the thick shell which was suffocating me, that I understood something about this 'immune system'. We do need to earn our right to operate here. We are culturally dissonant with the commonly held beliefs and values of america. We are something new! And we're not welcome yet.

One exception to the general disdain and torpor of the american naths was our Kula mom, the Firecat of Boston. She understands her role as kula mother. Her love overcame inertia and she threw her energy into our working. The encompassing love of the kula mother is the beginning of real Tantra. The kula mother is the one who puts her shoulder to the wheel of Tantric interaction and begins the process of acknowledgment and mirroring that lights the fire of inspiration that could burn so brightly in our clan hearts and our clan homes.

The entire working was internet based. I realized that there would be no great continental cone of energy raised by american magicians so I decided to try "The Fiction Suit". In "The Invisibles" by Grant Morrison, Raggedy Robin, isolated in a kind of space suit in the future, writes the storyline that is being enacted by the cast of her friends. It is a barely developed idea but it has captured the attention of many young magicians and this old one too. I only dimly grasp the meaning and procedure of this idea and what follows is definitely flying by nightlight. I began to script the protective circle idea. I wrote the same storyline four different ways. I hoped to be understood on at least one level, speaking to the heart, the mind, the body and at least to a sense of humour. I used the language of battle as it seemed the most dramatic and suitable to the job. Respectfully I suggested that naths view with their own magical mystical methods to see if my vision

had any reality for them.

I quickly entered into one of my own magical personae, Bujungi, and the world began to shift as I fed myself a diet of my own fictional efforts. My totem animals began to gather and I took them for long night walks down dark country roads and into the bush. I read a description of our personified targets and the weapons and tools they are known to use. I befriended the insects and animals that are usually theirs, working metaphorically and in absolutely literal ways too. I made deals with spiders and horses. Butterflies, frogs, hawks, wolves and a bear joined into the magic whirlwind which I was creating. (I am writing from a remote and wild part of Canada's north. All these animals are part of my life here.)

An experienced nath from the antipodes joined us. The sight of an ally on such a lonely field of action was beautiful. The mantras were proclaimed and posted to the net. The Mantra of the Nine Naths was used because from the beginning I had felt these mythical and very real Beings were the inspiration and the heart of this Work. I had brought this mantra from India. We would then use Mahendranath's mantra. This powerful and ancient formula came from the war god Virabhadra and had been given by him to Krishna as an aid to perform an impossible feat. The sigil was posted by the magician in Chicago. It had been drawn in such a way that it continually shifted from 2 to 3 dimensions and therefore fascinated the eye and was appropriate to the Work. More than 50 pages of internet postings flew out in 3 days. Coordination between magician and protective circle was terse but forcefully furthered the magic. The date was set for the 7th and 8th of October. On the 6th I built a fire and began chanting the mantras, visualizing the sigil and above all visualising the circle of protection.

The circle, to my tremendously affected sight was a beautiful vision. Astral beings and the astral body of the occasional embodied one began to gather in the gloom. Big cats and wolves patrolled the perimeter. These manifested as self-motivated, fully conscious, delighted and amused beings. Friends from among the dead began to appear. Our pilgrim workings on Bear Butte now brought native american friends into the circle. The antipodean mage appeared as many fierce and beautiful warriors, tattooed, drumming and wonderfully dressed for battle. Our local Rimpoche suddenly appeared with his famous shotgun, much stronger in the astral than in his ailing body at home. My recently deceased but oh so feisty 92 year old aunt appeared in all her 80 lb. fightin' glory.

I began to receive internal voice messages at a furious rate. Fire, incense, offerings, mantras, devotion, emotion, ash and smoke added to my intense inner experience. A need to accommodate Buddhists, Sufis and various styles and belief systems arose. The cone of energy abruptly rose above our huge and motley circle. The great energetically charged and lightning filled creation of our combined effort began to function and poured light energy and protection down on the mages in the center.

Suddenly a memory of a story I had read long ago surfaced. These dark forces enter the internet and operate from there. The story will permit them this escape route, as they can use their own fiction suit material. I sent out a warning to the Firecat and

Chicago. "Don't let them escape into the Web!!" G-mail flickered and went down for a moment, but came on again almost instantly. I saw the dark forces leaving the planet in a broad beam of grey, like a reversed rainstorm in the distance. I saw the sigil must be placed in the sky as a warning against their return to Earth.

Exhausted, I broke my vigil and made a cup of tea. It dawned on me that it was already over. The actual magical work lasted no more than an hour. I emailed the magician. Yes, as I had perceived at that great distance, the working was almost instantaneously successful. Once such fearsome beings, they had grown fat and lazy from years of easy pickings among the corrupt and easily lead.

That night at midnight I checked the crossroads. I stood alone in the lonely windy darkness, vulnerable and a little afraid. Nothing. All was clear. I shot the sigil into the sky one more time and warned the invaders to never return. I went home to bed. America had changed. Would the naths benefit?

PART TWO

This short description is written entirely from within the world view of magic reality. To an outsider the belief that my 'hallucinations' and internal dialogue have an external validity and an effect outside of my own mind appears to be nonsense, insanity or at best an example of pre-scientific, primitive thought.

Our magical tools are usually taken from a pre-scientific age. When modern science was born it was suckled on the debunking of our most basic human beliefs. This was liberating to the vast majority as we took back the night from the relentless fear of lurking supernatural evil and the dangerous otherworldly humans that haunted our lives with their curses and traffic with dark spirits. Simple disbelief in anything that was not material and measurable and malleable to our needs was the remedy to aeons of terror. Disbelief has liberated us from the coercive power of the churches that promise punishment of hell and reward of heaven. Why would we ever return to such darkness?

Much like the domestication of animals loses them their freedom while earning them a steady food supply and a measure of safety, science has been a double edged sword for us.

Freedom is our first reason for approaching magic again. Magic is individual, lacks rules or form and permits the poorest and lowliest among us to effect change without tools or permissions or specialized knowledge. At this point it has no context within our culture and as outsider activity it is unbounded by the usual conventions. We all dream of a life where we can do exactly as we see fit, a life that reflects our inner vision and our personal reasons for incarnating on planet earth.

A carefully de-conditioned mind and powerful magical intent can deliver us this life. Do as thou wilt, as free as the sky. This is the life of the Avadhoot.

When we work as a group we become the kula, the clan, the tribe. This must be a

tantric undertaking as nothing else forges the true links between and among us. Tantra on this level is very much acknowledging another and then others. This is too simple to be easy. After acknowledgment comes mirroring (I need a better word!). This is how we work together without coercion, bosses, single aims, or self-sacrifice to the group will. This is also too simple to be easy. It is at the very core and heart of tantra. [No good love and sex without it!]

As a kula we create our own world, our own magical consensus reality. I mean this as literally as aboriginal 'dreamtime' as what the yaquis and the egyptians and everybody else has built for themselves. We could actually carve out an astral world, another reality in another space outside of time and other earthbound limitations. From this shared secret place, created by repeated acts of imagination and creative intent, we can wander and create in the outer reaches of the imagination, the only frontier that is never fully explored. We could practice on the internet.

The rational scientific mind that finds this a toxic brew of lunacy and delusion is now out of date. The maxim "As above, So below" permits me to co-opt sub-atomic science as my own psychological reality. Probability theory becomes the royal road to magic. Science and magic only parted ways for a short time and now we are becoming reacquainted. Religion and fundamentalism are our true opposition because they forbid free exploration of own consciousness and our own imagination.

Posted in General | 13 Comments »

FICTION SUIT

October 5th, 2005

Howler Nath and ZigZag Nath put on their super cool, well fitting, slick fiction suits. Together they create a reality by act of imagination. If you choose to enter it, you may do so. You will be tested and tried, you will be frightened and endangered. This reality is full of implication, mystery and power, all the more because you are there.

Howler Nath is the great Nath Magician. He is guided by his mysterious, powerful and deeply meaningful Guru. He gathers about him the bravest and truest of young magicians. They have answered his call to battle and they arrive prepared. They are naked boys and girls, fierce, wise, painted with their cult marks and their personal symbols. Many sport dreadlocks and many are covered in ash. Among their weapons are tridents, guns, warplanes, magic words and mudras, sigils and over-arching vision.

ZigZag Nath calls together the outer circle. She calls to the honourable, noble and big-hearted Naths, the playful and skillful Buddhists, the daring and devious Sufis. Together they head into battle against dark blood-eating aliens..unh..maybe demons.. that infest our new homeland.

Like magicians before him the mighty Howler slays or even converts to guardians the embodied evil that he encounters on the great battlefield. Reminiscent of the Kalachakra, he fights for the spiritual survival and health of all beings.

This magician is strengthened by the jeers from the cheap seats, their insults polish him to shining bronze. Adversity increases his lustre. Hunger sharpens his senses. Poverty heals his spirit. Almost invincible, what tragic flaw could betray him....?

The 'off' button is: wag your finger in the mirror and say three times, NO NO NO, THIS ISN'T REALLY HAPPENING. Go home and sleep well.

The rest of you may be interested in the implications of the Fiction Suit. It is a modern magical device invented by that excellent magician Grant Morrison. His text is called "The Invisibles" and it is a major late 20th century Tantra . The world of magic must be found through a creative act on the part of the seeker. The Outer Improbability Fields can only be found in improbable ways. The Fiction Suit is a modern route to magical reality...and it's ssstylin'.

Posted in General | No Comments »

Twilight Language

October 5th, 2005

In English I think the term Twilight Language (skt. Sandya basha) is best compared to the Zen koan. The logical mind short circuits and the body is left to feel its way to a resolution. Ideally tension is released. Laughter is almost guaranteed. Don't think of elephants.

Sometimes twilight language uses an outright lie, an assertion that can only be dissolved by thinking clearly for oneself. Again the body, providing you are actually in it and not 6 in. over, is a great tool for recognizing a lie, a bad situation or an ill-intentioned charmer. This language plays with our expectations and our preconceptions. The successful use of TL should feel like getting the right thread and easily pulling the whole fabric apart. It could feel like a circular unzipping of the thick skin around our minds, like a light going on in a vastly more spacious inner vision. Aha! I see. Everything I say is a lie.

Mahendranath says naths should not be named with god names. It is arrogant and disrespectful.

But Mahendra is a god's name. The rule dissolves leaving nothing but fundamentalist attitude exposed. Rules written in twilight language are always tricky and are like traps for the unwary. The Discordian Bible is a masterpiece of jokes and puns and rebellion against the status quo. It is a great hilarious romp. It is written almost entirely in TL and very rewarding to study. fnord
to be continued.....

Posted in General | 2 Comments »

The Nath Bones

August 18th, 2005

Many ideas and practices will be discussed and tested through these pages. I believe this is the bedrock of Nath belief in India and the ideas are universally accepted in Indian spiritual thinking.

All Naths, whether from ancient India or the modern world, share one great desire. We seek direct knowledge of the Absolute, knowing full well that we will be forever transformed on every level of our existence and Being through such contact.

Naths have traditionally been masters of Yoga. Yoga is anything that brings one closer to the goal of union with the Absolute.

Naths do not seek the great treasures of this world nor the great pleasures. This means we are no longer playing by the rules. Subtract desire for wealth, fame, power, knowledge, family, love, security and comfort from the equation of life and what have you got? If nothing else the discomfort factor provides impetus to get the whole damn thing done as soon as possible. Liberation is the goal, pain drives us, curiosity leads us, but what attracts us? Unless we have witnessed and recognised the Avadhoot we travel with the same hope, illusion and blind faith as all the other pilgrims on this earth.

All the knowledge and technique in the world is useless baggage, unless it successfully contributes to the Ultimate Transformation, changing a severely under-performing human into the bizarre, self-realized, liberated Avadhoot.

Because we are newcomers to the territory, we have little to go on except wild assertions from ancient times and translations that never quite mean what they say. Culturally our central obsession doesn't even register as existing let alone being of any importance. The aims, methods and results are alien to the modern mind.

I don't know what you are doing here, but I wish you

PEACE FREEDOM AND HAPPINESS.

ADESH

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News & Events

The founders of Pax Templi hold biweekly public Celebrations of Liber XV, The Gnostic Catholic Mass as well as various lectures and classes. It is a project that continues to evolve. For a current list of events, please check our calendar.

Location

Pax Templi performance space is located in El Cerrito, CA at the corner of San Pablo & Central. email for details

Support Pax Templi

Make payments with PayPal - it's fast, free and secure!

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

Pax Templi exists to promulgate the Law of Thelema.

We are devoted to the teaching and practice of Magick and facilitating personal Initiation in an atmosphere of mutual Respect, Love and Brotherhood with an unwavering commitment to Excellence and Harmony.

Let the rituals be rightly performed with joy & beauty!

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Love is the Law, love under will.

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OTHER LINKS:

The A.'.A.'. (from OrdoAA.org)

The A.'.A.'. (from College of Thelema page)

Introduction

Documents

The Legacy of Jane Wolfe
SororMeral.org (tribute Web site to Phyllis E. Seckler)

A.'.A.'. Grade Sign Illustrations

Diamondstar 418 Devoted to the growth of Light, Life, Love & Liberation for All
Fraternitas LVX Occulta An Aquarian Age Mystery School of the Western Mystery Tradition

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Libri of Aleister Crowley This one's pretty obvious, too!

Red Flame - A Thelemic Research Journal Jerry & Marlene Cornelius' site. One truly never quite knows what one will find here. Primarily devoted to their journal, The Red Flame.

RRetAC.org The Order of the Ruby Rose & Golden Cross

Sacred Geometry Home Page by Bruce Rawles

Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola In his earliest notes, Crowley assigned this to A.'.A.'. 5=6.

<http://www.aumha.org/arcane/tephilah.htm>

43 captures

8 May 2001 - 15 Jun 2025

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About this capture

THELEMIC TEPHILAH

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Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

Bhakti Yoga, in its higher forms, is a continuous recollection of Deity-as-Love, and a continuing participation in that Love. It is, at root, identical with the d'vequth ("adherence, intense devotion") of the Chassidim.

Both bhakti and d'vequth have outer and inner aspects of worship. Ritualistic forms serve initially to establish the conscious awareness of this relationship with the root of all love and, later, to serve as a stimulus to its continuing recollection; but the essence of the higher practice is simply the continuing awareness of, and abiding within, the interminable Love itself. As it is written in Liber Legis: "A feast every day in your hearts in the joy of my rapture! A feast every night unto Nu, and the pleasure of uttermost delight!"

The davaqah regards this intimate relationship as being with “God.” The bhakti regards it as being with Ishvara. We say it is with the Holy Guardian Angel. All of this is the same, but for the words; and we are counseled best to remember those words with which the feet of the Probationer of A.'.A.'. are first set firmly upon the Straight Path: “Should therefore the candidate hear the name of any God, let him not rashly assume that it refers to any known God, save only the God known to himself.”

One of the most successful approaches to this state of bhakti is the Jewish tradition of daily reading in the Sepher ha-Torah, regarding the whole of the Chamsha (lit., “group of five”) as a wheel, or cycle, that one completes in the course of each year. For many years, I contemplated an adaptation of this concept; for we, in Thelema, have our own Sepher ha-Torah, or “Book of the Law;” and our tradition has, as well, long recognized the Torah as a Rota (“wheel”) — whence our word Taro. I established a personal foundation for this some years ago in identifying sacred readings and meditations for each of the 22 days of the Thelemic High Holy Season (March 20-April 10 of each year), originally shared only with Second Order members of Temple of Thelema, and later (Anno XCIV) published in Black Pearl.

On these 12th and 13th days of October, Anno XCIV (1998 E.V.), my mind has returned more pointedly to the deeper concept, and I have found myself receiving a more complete model, and then working out its details. Of great interest to me is that these two days coincide, this year, with Simchas Torah, the annual festival of the Torah that inaugurates the Jewish annual cycle of readings. Though the Thelemic cycle commences nearly six months from now, at the Vernal Equinox, I have decided to follow these promptings and let the teaching have its birth on its own schedule.

Until a better term comes along, the traditional term tephilah is recommended to describe this cycle of daily practices, in its particular sense of a psalm, or song upraised in adoration. [See below for download links and further explanation.]

Love is the law, love under will.

— Yaakov Dov bar-Aeshel
13 October, 1998 E.V. (Anno XCIV)

THE CYCLE of READINGS

For the 22 days of the Holy Season each year (March 20-April 10), a correspondence is noted to the 22 Hebrew letters and their associated Tarot Trumps. These are the basis of such personal meditations as one may wish to undertake. The readings for each day are selected primarily (but not exclusively) from the Thelemic Canon (A.'.A.'. Class A Documents), so as to correspond to the symbolism of the Letter and Trump.

The rest of the year is divided into three primary periods, with two interregna. These three periods are linked to readings (a few verses per day) from three Class A Documents: Liber LXV (Liber Cordis Cincti Serpente, "The Book of the Heart Girt with a Serpent"); Liber VII (Liber Liberi vel Lapis Lazuli, "The Book of the God Liber [Bacchus], or, The Book of the Blue Stone [Lapis Lazuli]"); and Liber CCXX (Liber L. vel Legis, "The Book of the Law").

These Books were chosen, and in this sequence, for three reasons. First, they are the three greatest of the Thelemic canon. Second, they are the three assigned specifically (for memory work) to the three Foundation grades of A.'.A.'. : 0=0, 1=10, and 2=9. Third, they reflect, in this sequence, the natural path of spiritual progress, because they correspond, respectively, to the five Elements, then to the seven Planets, then to the triad of root alchemical principles (that is, to the Supernal Triad).

The overall plan is as follows:

THE HIGH HOLY DAYS (March 20-April 10).

These 22 days have distinctive readings as outlined previously.

THE ELEMENTS (Liber LXV) (April 11-September 10)

One chapter per month for five months. One day (the 10th of each month) intervenes between the prior section and this section, and between each chapter.

THE PLANETS (Liber VII) (September 11-October 29)

One chapter per week for seven weeks. (NOTE: This cycle has a relationship to the 49-petaled rose.)

INTERREGNUM (11 days) (October 30-November 9)

A pause, corresponding to the Abyss.

THE SUPERNALS or TRINITY (Liber CCXX) (September 11-October 29)

One chapter per month for three months. One day (the 10th of each month) intervenes between the prior section and this section, and between each chapter.

February 11 through March 19 constitutes 37 days (or 38 in a leap year; the next one of which will be 2004, the Centennial of Liber Legis). These days may be used as a time of silence and asceticism following the annual cycle, as the earth lies dormant and the Dark Cycle's energies build and accumulate for their rushing-forth in spring; or they may be equated to the 37 letters of the phrase Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. (If the latter approach is used, in a leap year, the final day, March 19, should be the day to which nothing is assigned.) The eve before the Vernal Equinox is dedicated to a reading of "The Prologue of the Unborn."

DOWNLOAD A FORMATTED "WORKING KIT" FOR THIS CYCLE:

I have packaged this entire system in a Microsoft Word 2000 document here. It is

formatted to produce a set of cards, one for each day of the year, including the exact quotes with which one will be working. Specifically, it is formatted for Avery No. 8387 cards. These are 5.5" x 4.25" cards, four per sheet. You will need just under 400 cards (100 sheets). Alternately, you can print this on ordinary paper and use it as is, or cut the pages into quarters.

If you want the Excel spreadsheet containing the data from which this was built using Word's mailmerge function, you can download it here.

<http://www.aumha.org/arcane/ccxx.htm>

39 captures

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About this capture

Liber L., Cap. 1

NUIT

Verses 1-9

Verses 10-19

Verses 20-30

Verses 31-39

Verses 40-49

Verses 50-59

Verses 60-66 Liber L., Cap. 1, vv. 1-9

NUIT

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10-19	20-30	31-39	40-49	50-59	60-66			

1. Had! The manifestation of Nuit

In the point-experience of a moment — any moment, any event — is disclosed the whole of the universe — both its meaning and its actuality.

DEFINITION: Manifestation. A demonstration of the existence, reality, or presence of someone or something. (From Latin manifestus, lit. palpable, "gripped by the hand.")

I use "manifestation" quite a lot, especially in places that Qabalistically indicate the externalization of a subtler idea into sensory reality at Malkuth. I note, though, that the word is defined as the demonstration of the existence, reality, or presence of someone or something. A "manifest destiny" is not merely an extant destiny; it is an evident one, a disclosed one. Much more than I had ever realized before, this is the opposite of the "hiding" of II:1. This is saying, "Look! See, here She is," rather than, "Don't look! No, you

can't see Him;" for, "she shall be known & I never."

"To manifest" is the literal meaning of the Hebrew ChVH — the name we know as "Eve." Similarly, Had, the Hidden One, is a variant of the name ADM, Adam.

Therefore, Had — the point-experience — is disclosed as the "making evident" of Nuit. The particular is the manifestation of the general (a form of the primary doctrine of Hermes). I have certainly long understood that Nuit's manifestation can be perceived from Hadit's point of view; but is something else being said here? Is He not being declared to be that manifestation? This certainly cannot be interpreted to mean that Hadit is "known." It must be kept, rather, in the framework of Him being the Knower. But is the self-experience of Existence the disclosure, or evidence, of the Universe, of Reality? Experience inclines one to say "Yes."

Finding Hadit (the "secret Centre") discloses the inner night (Fr. nuit) which I described in the poem "October Dawn."

The purpose of Cap. I, therefore, is to make Nuit known, to reveal Her, to unveil Her (v. I:2), even as that of Cap. II is to hide Hadit, i.e., to find the most suitable veil by which to disclose the Invisible. Verses I:1 and II:1 cannot effectively be discussed apart from each other.

GEMATRIA: Latin manifestus = 105. (The variant manufestus, from manus, is 115; manus = 60.) 105 is an important number of the geometry of the Pentagram, and shows up in the symbolism of the [...] ritual. It is the value of H.P.K., the notariqon of Hoor-Paar-Kraat, and several very descriptive words that result from rearranging these three letters. In Latin it is also Mercurius, rosa lucis, and habes verbum.

AC's discussion of the primal meanings of the names Had and Nu, is both relevant and important. Surprisingly, he says Nuit is the speaker, invoking her lover. (Updated 11/12/03 EV)

2. The unveiling of the company of heaven

(Verse 1 was themed to Had = Kether. Verse 2, agreeing with zodiacal Chokmah, speaks toward Malkuth.)

As discerned in verse 1, this "unveiling" is the whole purpose of the first chapter. It is also the natural consequence of what is described in verse 1, the disclosure of the universe in the point-experience of event. The "company of heaven" unveiled is Nuit who is being "manifested." It is also composed of "Every man and every woman," for they (we) are stars.

It requires the direct experience of Cosmic Consciousness to perceive the scope of this unveiling. On a lesser scale, the image resembles that of the angelic Elohim, and even of the Beni Elohim. Unveiled are the Tzavaoth, the "heavenly hosts." More broadly, the

verse could mean, “Here come the gods!” But the interpretation given above is much better. (AC concurred.)

AC then added the important microcosmic interpretation: “...as Khabs... is ‘Star,’ there is a further meaning; this Book is to reveal the Secret Self of a man, i.e. to initiate him.” (Updated 11/12/03 EV)

3. Every man and every woman is a star

This sentence is the real essence of Thelema. This is the fundamental teaching of The Book of the Law. Eight words; 28 letters. Every 93-key of our doctrine exists as a corollary of this, the first overt teaching of Liber Legis.

Notice the reversal of perspective between v. 2 and v. 3. In v. 2, Chokmah, the male perspective, is witnessing the whole of the body of the heavens. In v. 3, Binah, the feminine, is witnessing all of the individual components, each individual element.

I have already, this morning, begun employing this verse as a point-of-view to adopt; or, rather, to consciously witness in each person I meet. The consciousness of this teaching is the practice. Much that is observed is too subtle to write. Many people veil themselves heavily — as is their right. But many do not.

If every person is a star, what of that star’s planets? Within the microcosm, the chakras are the “7 interior planets.” Other types of beings may be stars with different planetary compositions, but human stars have (at least primarily) these 7 planets. This is subtler than the chakras, though; they are but one important example of something broader. I have long felt that the planetary forces — the 7 Elohim — were chief among the primary magical forces that we were created to command. I now see this from the perspective of the Sun. There is much more to develop here, but the basics now seem clear to me. (Notice, by the way, that the greatest classic of planetary magick is the so-called “Greater Key” of SOL-OM-ON, 6 6 6, the Sun.)

“Star” is here, apparently, Khabs. Each of us is, at our core, Khabs; but our lives, our veils etc., are Khabs am Pekht, “Light in extension.” (I have developed this more extensively for initiates of the Artisan Degree of Temple of Thelema.) This, as 451 (the Greek Konx Om Pax), is of course the central idea of the name A.'.A.'. Knowledge of self, and of our way, and of the world, is encompassed in the phrase, “Light in extension,” and our ability to witness that L.V.X. “Khabs” is related to Kokav, Mercury, “star” (hence the eight words of this verse?). Every man and every woman is Kokav.

NOTE — Crowley’s differentiation between “a male star” and “a female star,” which he claims, “explains fully the difference between the sexes,” is pure crap! There is no fundamental difference at the stellar level that is perpetuated into the physical. One of the most certain observations of reincarnation is that a being (and this is probably true of all beings) is incarnated variously as male and female. Physical gender is a convenience of the occasion. Anything that implies the contrary is simply wrong. This is

not to say that every star is identical. In fact, such “male stars” and “female stars” (and numerous other varieties) may well exist as such — but that differentiation is irrelevant to physical gender. It is my observation that all beings incarnate variously as male or female until they can understand and embrace all such combinations.

My phrase “the stellar level” above has me asking, what is the stellar level? I believe it is Briatic. Khabs is the “house” of Hadit, the Yod. “The Star” in Tarot is attributed to Heh. Khabs is, therefore, at least referable to Binah, and perhaps to Briah. Exactly how we formulate this will determine whether we attribute Khu to Tiphereth or Yesod. I am tentatively inclined to the former. It also may be significant that KhV = 26, the value of the Divine Name of Tiphereth.

I have at least to consider an alternate meaning; not that each man or woman is a star, but only that every man and woman is a star; that Sun + Moon = Truth. Despite its doctrinal correctness on one plane, it is not what is taught here. A critical reading of the verse precludes this interpretation. There may, however, be a vastly more exalted idea, viz., that the sum of all the combinations and permutations of every Yang and every Yin compose, in the aggregate, is One Star. This is worthy of future meditation. Nonetheless, the simple interpretation, first given above, is surely the “functional” one. (4/3/95 EV; updated 11/14/03 EV)

4. Every number is infinite: there is no difference

Each thing whatsoever is ultimately itself. No matter how similar or related two things appear, they are actually distinct to an immeasurably vast degree. This is the idea that makes verse 4 inseparable from verse 3, one sliding effortlessly into the other. (If “number” and “star” somehow meant the same thing, there would be no apparent loss of continuity between them at all.)

These mathematics are very exalted. I think, for present purposes, that one cannot think of numbers as existing to differentiate the quantity of items (the purpose for which numbering was first created). Abstracting from this one detail (which anchors numbers in Assiah), the present verse becomes a simple mathematical truism: Each number is a universe unto itself. Every “number” — every discrete idea — has a truly infinite amount to be learned about it. This, as well, is how individuals are to go about relating to this present Book (and, for that matter, to themselves and each other).

There is likely, in addition, a classic Qabalistic significance to these words. For example, Sepher Yetzirah I:1 says that the Universe was created by Yah with three sepharim. These are sepher, sephar, and sippur. The second, sephar (SPR), is translated “number” (cf. English cipher). It also seems to mean “dimension,” or quantitative extension. The root SPR literally means, “to scratch, scrape” (like most ancient root words that relate to writing). This meaning evolved into the secondary meaning, “to inscribe”; specifically the inscription of letters on a stone! It then also meant, “to number,” and “to speak or utter.” SPR, sephar, means, “numbering.” Interestingly, SPRH, is, literally, “a book.” It is the same word as SPRH, recognizable to us as

sephirah.

So, in part, we are being told that every “notch” or “nitch” of the universe is infinite. Each extant thing — by which we also include ideas — is a truly infinite well of possible experience. Furthermore, a brief meditation on these three letters in sequence — S, P, R — is very productive. It becomes readily clear why each sephar is “infinite.”

GEMATRIA: SPR = 340. It is composed of the intersecting paths of Samekh and Peh, with the Sun mounted thereon. It is a rosy cross! (340 is Shin-Mem, Shem, “name.” AC said, therefore, that it “Connects with 6 [the hexagram] through ShM, the fire and the water conjoined in the Name. Thus useful as a hint in ceremonial.” This confirms its equation to the Rosy Cross.)

The phrase “there is no difference” cross references to verse 22, where it applies to all things soever (presumably, every aspect of Nuit).

(This is a subtle Chesed reference, since “the chief of all” in that v. 22 is a 7=4 function as an expression of Chokmah. This verse 4, and the one that follow, would be related in theory to Chesed and Geburah. Verse 5 is unmistakable; this one more subtle. The basic idea in v. 4 is in greatness, infinitude, etc., plus the tolerance that comes from “no difference.”)

(Last revised 11/14/03 EV)

5. Help me, o warrior lord of Thebes, in my unveiling before the Children of men
On the Stélé of Revealing is the phrase, “Osiris [i.e., the deceased], slave (or prophet) of Mentu, Lord of Thebes, opening the doors of the sky in Thebes: Ankh-af-na-Khonsu.” In translation this is an ambiguous apositive. Crowley evidently read this stélé passage to mean that Ankh-af-na-Khonsu — Crowley himself — was being addressed as this “warrior lord.” There seems no doubt, though, that AC misunderstood the passage.

It is Mentu, an Egyptian solar deity, who is here addressed as “Lord of Thebes,” just as he often was in ancient Egyptian texts. The other deity thus referenced, according to Budge (Vol. I, p. 492), was the similar god Horus.

Whatever else this verse might mean on deeper inspection, the simple surface meaning is a petition for Horus (or Mentu) to help further the unveiling — the disclosure — of Nuit “before the children of men.”

In conjunction with the next verse, though, I am inclined to think it something more. Within this Book, Ra-Hoor-Khuit not only serves as a “generic,” or “stand-in,” for the Holy Guardian Angel, but also for a particular spiritual experience. My best understanding of this verse is that Aiwass/Nuit is evoking an adept having the experience symbolized by Ra-Hoor-Khuit to “be Hadit” and provide the assistance requested. This likely was a specific instruction to Crowley, i.e., a communication of

True Will. I think it equally as likely to be an instruction to adepts in general.

“Thebes” raises many questions in my mind — not the least of which is its relationship to AC’s Oedipus complex!

There were two Thebeses in the ancient world. One was an ancient religious and political capital of Upper Egypt, the governing triad of which was Amen-Ra, Mut, and Khensu (Khonsu). The other was in east-central Greece, the chief city of ancient Boeotia until destroyed by Alexander in 336 B.C., and the primary location of the Oedipus legend. (Budge’s discussion of the origin of the name “Thebes.” (Vol. II, p. 3) add nothing of value.)

GEMATRIA: In Greek, the name is ThHBAI = 30. Treated as Coptic, ThEBAI = 418.

(Clearly a Geburah verse.) (4/3/95 EV; revised 11/15/03 EV)

6. Be thou Hadit, my secret centre my heart & my tongue

I interpret this verse substantially differently from To Mega Therion; and I have always felt quite clear about its basic meaning.

T.M.T. has read this verse as referring to three separate anatomical locations: genitals, heart, and tongue. (See Hadit as depicted on stélé 666.) The one thing I do find really interesting about this is that the name Nu, spelled Nun Vav, is Scorpio-Taurus: Scorpio ruling the genitals, and Taurus the throat and speech centers related to the Visuddha chakra. (The tongue extends down the throat and has ancient specific association with Taurus.) Scorpio Taurus Leo (genitals, throat/tongue, heart) = NVT, Nu’t = 65!

But Hadit is always the very (geometric) center of Nuit. See Cap. II, v. 3. In an infinite space, every point is, by definition and function, the mathematical center. This is, in fact, the very definition of Hadit. To “Be... Hadit” is to be conscious of being at the very center of Her. This Center is the “heart” (in both the geometrical and allegorical senses of the word). It is also, then, able to serve as her “tongue.” “Heart” and “tongue” may be the centripetal and centrifugal aspects.

To whom is She speaking? I believe she is speaking to every one of us, despite the use of the singular “thou.” This is arguably the most fundamental practical instruction in the entire Book. It is echoed in Cap. II, v. 76, where it is more pointedly aimed at the Prophet; but here, despite the singular “thou,” I firmly believe that every reader is being instructed to Be Hadit, as a central instruction of Thelema. Based upon the identification, in the prior verse, of the “warrior lord of Thebes” with either Horus or Mentu, She is specifically calling upon a solar deity (a star) to be Her center, Her heart, and Her tongue. (This is a Tipheric verse, especially if the Scorpio-Leo-Taurus = 65 interpretation is employed.)

If “Nu” is treated as a Latin word, it appears as a Fourth Declension noun, though

admittedly atypical: Nu, Nus. “Heart of Nu” is, therefore, Cor Nus. (“Nuit,” in contrast, is not recognizable as a Latin form, nor readily adapted into one.) [A very great deal of theoretical gematria, both Latin and Hebrew, ensues, examining this phrase to extract its gold. I am not sure it would be of any value to anyone else, so I have not included them.] (4/3/95 EV; updated 11/15/03 EV)

7. Behold! it is revealed by Aiwass the minister of Hoor-paar-kraat
Apparently a simple verse, and one I have addressed previously. Aiwass, of course, is [Hebrew] OYVZ = 93 and [Greek] AIFASS = 418. He is 93 and 418. In a macrocosmic sense He is a direct agent of the Child-god of the New Aeon. In a microcosmic sense, He is “the Voice of the Silence,” representing the HGA function in general, and AC’s HGA in particular. His name discloses that He is the living essence of 93 and 418, that they are the formulae of his being.

This Book, therefore, is an HGA communication to AC, yet carrying the message of a universal force (which is neither strange nor rare for such communications).

There is wonderful language by AC in his commentary here, on the HGA. I have used it in another paper for the Order...

P.S. — Netzach, because it is the Hidden Consciousness that is revealed. (8/22/96 EV)

8. The Khabs is in the Khu, not the Khu in the Khabs
Another verse with which I have worked much in the past. Note that AC considers that the text per se begins here.

Budge (Gods of the Egyptians, Vol. I, p. 39) gave the following:

ba, a soul
kau, a double
khu, a spirit [he gives “spirits”]
sahu
sekhem

He says the last two are difficult to translate, “but they are rendered with approximate correctness by ‘spiritual body,’ and ‘power.’”

Ba we have seen elsewhere from Fagan’s discussion of the Benu-bird. Budge says it “was intimately connected with the heart, and was supposed to be gratified by offerings...” The “double” sounds like a kind of astral body, a “shadow” aspect connected to the physical body (see p. 39 for other details). The Khu “was the seat of the spiritual part of man, and gods and divine personages were credited with the possession of several spirits [Khus].” Sahu sounds like the etheric body. Sekhem was not a body, but seems to have vitalized the sahu etc.

AC calls khu “the magical entity of a man.” What does this mean?

I have previously proposed Khabs as Briatic. Khu is probably somehow Yetziratic; but at which level?

The bottom line meaning of the verse is that the Khabs, or light, or star, is within what we usually call “us.” The Khu is something closer to what we usually call “us,” “ourselves.” AC uses “mind and body” very roughly to allude to this, although Khu is clearly not the guph. If Khabs is Chiah, is Khu the highest aspect of Ruakh? (I need a better way to subdivide Ruakh.) AC calls Khu a “form,” a “garment” woven by the Khabs by which it can gain self-consciousness and thus experience.

(Later:) I realized today an interesting corollary to Liber Legis I:8. There is a general principle that the outer is the symbol of the inner, not the other way around. This is one special case of the general statement. It also teaches us, therefore, that the Khu is symbolic of the Khabs. By observing our personality manifestations, life events, etc., we may witness and come to understand the Reality of ourselves that lies behind these outer manifestations.

[These notes, remarks, and thoughts should be compared, and reconsidered in light of, my remarks on Florence Farr’s writings, included in the Notes of 776½.]

AC wrote (Equinox of the Gods) that this verse shows that her message is to humanity in general.

(Interesting Hod verse for Kokav.) (8/22/96 EV)

9. Worship then the Khabs, and behold my light shed over you
Again, this has been adapted and integrated into the [—] initiation. It is one of the most important, basic practical cues in the entire Book, the basic Raja Yoga method of adoring the Self within. (4/3/95 EV)

Return to TOP of page.

Continue to next verse. Liber L., Cap. 1, vv. 10-19

NUIT

10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1-9	20-30	31-39	40-49	50-59	60-66				

10. Let my servants be few & secret: they shall rule the many & the known.
The number Ten — Malkuth — is the Kingdom.

The real “servants of Nuit” are necessarily “few and secret.” This does not refer to all

Thelemites (so-called), but only to the few.

The key here is the equation of the word “servant” to “administrator.” This we know from the mysteries of the 32nd Path of Wisdom, and it is out-and-out confirmed by the present verse. The servants of the Highest are the administrators of the Law.

More deeply, we are told that this is so even if they are not terribly visible! One can “govern” overtly; and one can also govern from isolation, by (for example) the power of one’s meditations upon the group mind of humanity.

Why, though, the apparent imperative, the fiat? Is this but an affirmation of reality? Or is there a mandate present?

Crowley, after confirming all the foregoing, made an important distinction. These are Nuit’s servants, not those of Horus, the visible object of worship whose “law is for all.” The servants of Ra-Hoor-Khuit are naturally more visible. As I now realize, Liber Nu is only “for the winners of Ordeal x.” How does one serve Nu? What is this exact class? AC believed it is (perhaps) those who succeed in worshipping the Khabs. I note, however, that in this whole chapter we are asked to aid Her in her manifestation — to be Hadit, Her secret center, and the warrior lord of Thebes all rolled into one. This sounds like a very high adept to me!

It is quite clear how verse 10 refers to the Kingdom. This being so, we now close the first set of verses, those I view as relating to Aleph. (2/17/01 EV; tweaked on later dates through 11/15/2007 EV)

11. These are fools that men adore; both their Gods & their men are fools.

First off, v. 11 has a transparent relationship to the 11th Path, Aleph, The Fool. It is also adequately a Kether verse (opening the second, or Beth, decanate of verses). We shall see a similar “fools” reference in v. 31, which commences the fourth (Daleth) set of ten verses.

On the surface, the meaning of this verse is wonderfully clear. The modern political process alone is enough to support the literal truth of this verse! It is a pan of the “popular choice.” It is a companion verse to II:25, “Ye are against the people, O my chosen!” (Being the 91st verse in the whole book, II:25 is also a Kether verse. It starts the 10th, or Yod, series.)

The word “fools” appears to be used in I:11 [111 = Aleph!] in its lower sense, its derogatory sense. Or, instead of derogatory, perhaps we should say that, being bags of hot air and of the nature of wind, they are transient, breezy — everything we attribute to “air” and to “popular.” They are fads. Perhaps this verse, nonjudgmentally, merely says, “popular fads, leaders, pop figures, religions, etc. are transient.” Populus is a lunar idea, which cross-references to Air through Yesod. This, then, contrasts them to the servants of Nuit, who partake of a quality of eternity.

I just realized that, grammatically, this verse could be read in an entirely different sense than I have ever thought. I have always read it as, “These that men adore are fools,” where “fools” is the predicate nominative. But it is (theoretically) every bit as correct to read it as, “These are fools that adore men.” Poetic, awkward, but accurate grammar. This alternate interpretation presents a really nice follow-on to previous verses — several in a row. It says, take your worship of anyone (any person) to whom you displace your sense of power, and put it on the Khabs and on Nuit instead!

Crowley also believed there is a high, holy meaning regarding Aleph and The Fool; nor did he miss the verse number, 11. For example, he reiterated that many of the humans of legends or Gods of religion that have been worshipped are cognate to Aleph. (See Book of Thoth, Aleph section, for the extended development of this idea.) I tend to agree with AC that, “The statement in the text is, superficially, either a platitude or a petulance; neither sounds like the tone of Nuit.” I think it must continue from vv. 10-12 — it all seems connected — but I think we are missing something. There is also an obscurity in “These;” does it have an antecedent? Does it refer to “the many and the known”? Or to something else? (2/15/01 EV; tweaked on later dates through 11/15/2007 EV)

12. Come forth, o children, under the stars & take your fill of love.

In contrast to the prior verse, where “fools” are adored, Nuit’s “children” are here enjoined to come forth “under the stars,” before the stellar personages. Come forth, that is, before the body of Nuit. Come forth, most especially, in the realization that “Every man and every woman is a star,” that you are in the open and free. This love — what kind is it? Is it love of Nuit? The open love of witnessing the stellar reality of all others?

We are called forth from hiding, from having lived in some kind of fear. We need fear no longer. Even the stellar essence of us can emerge from the caverns of subconscious sequestering.

Love the heavens! (Love your Mother!) Love the infinite, and find infinite love.

From what are we to come forth? Surely it is the veilings and limitations of our own being, at whatever level we are capable of perceiving and understand these. It is the Horus in us — the “child” within us each — that is called forth from the bonds of circumstance and personality into the stellar, Briatic field, the field of Nuit’s love.

(Like v. 2, visibly a Chokmah verse, with stellar references. Thus also some relevancy to the 12th Path of Beth = KVKB, “children,” etc. Additionally, 12 implies the zodiac.) (2/17/01 EV)

I now understand this verse, most simply, to be a call for all to awaken to Briatic consciousness. That is the state which fulfills all the terms of this and collateral verses. But I understand that this interpretation will not readily speak to everyone. There are

psychological and sociological implications (given above) which serve in the interim and may, in fact, lead to the awakening of Briatic consciousness. (11/16/03 EV)

13. I am above you and in you. My ecstasy is in yours[.] My joy is to see your joy
This verse is poetical and beautiful beyond measure. Also, for a Western mind in 1904, it was probably mind-blowing; but, holding some mental objectivity so that the pure pleasure of this utterance doesn't waft us away, we find that its doctrine is quite obvious.

First, it equates "above" and "within." The "higher" and the "inner" are one. This has now become a commonplace understanding in our Work.

Second, these are specific positions of observance employed in both Eastern and Western magical training. The very highest deity ideas are sometimes witnessed before us, sometimes above us, and sometimes within us, especially within the heart. Nuit is one such idea.

Third, her ecstasy and joy are equated with ours. To worship her, to give her pleasure, we must have it ourselves! This is the tantric doctrine, among others, and one on which I have spoken numerous times, at length. It is the highest form of worship for the general populace, and one of the highest for initiates. (In his Old Comment days, this was all theory to AC.)

GEMATRIA: 13 is the number of unity and love. Those two ideas are interwoven in this verse as beautifully as could be imagined without overtly naming them.

AC discusses how Nuit seems to speak as an individual, and contrasts this to how we speak as a unit notwithstanding that we are composed of countless "selves," each of which lives its own life cycle as an "individual." I note, therefore, that not only is hers the voice of the Whole, but that this is a vision of the HGA who is that One Voice of that whole which transcends all the conflicting aspects of what we call ourselves.

(This verse is very appropriate to Binah — and also to Gimel, Path 13 — in many ways; but then, so are most verses in this particular chapter.) (4/3/95 EV)

14. Above, the gemmed azure is/ The naked splendour of Nuit;/ She bends in ecstasy to kiss/ The secret ardours of Hadit./ The winged globe, the starry blue,/ Are mine, O Ankh-af-na-khonsu!

This verse is a direct quote (paraphrased into poetry by AC) of the first lines of the Stélé of Revealing. (Actually AC has always said this; but, having just examined the translations of the hieroglyphs on the stélé, I cannot find it. It supposedly commences the obverse. My theory is that this particular verse is a complete poetic fabrication by AC from the descriptive sobriquets of the deities about the illustrative painting itself. When Liber Legis was dictated, this verse was represented by the phrase, "V.1. [verse

1] of Spell filled [?] the Sky.”)

However, the name “Nuit” is not mentioned even once on the stélé. This name did not originate with the dictation. AC used it in this form as early as 1901 in the last poem of his “Holy of Holies.” There are several aspects of that poem that show the inner formulation of what would appear in Liber Legis. This was about a year after Mathers raised him to 5=6. It was probably on his Mexican trip, and seemingly after his skrying of the 30th and 29th Aethyrs.

In any case, the verse is beautiful. (It has often been emphasized — mostly by Grant — that it refers to a sexual posture. It may, or it may not. It is beautiful either way!) Nuit is declared to be the “gemmed azure” itself, the star-bespeckled sky; and to be “above” (which, we have just seen, is equated to “within” — this bejeweled azure is also “within”). Like any two poles of natural force, she and Hadit are drawn powerfully to each other; and, perhaps because his constantly changing position paradoxically defines the stable center, this mutual attraction is seen as Nuit bending down. This is a perception that can be a mystical result; it is also a worthwhile meditation on its own. This “bending down” is, to her, ecstasy.

Now, we already know that her ecstasy is in ours! So this bending of Nuit must also be (to state the obvious) ecstasy to us. It is the reciprocal hexagram relationship of the HGA’s communion. A distinctly erotic symbolism is employed.

Now, remember that the phrase we previously used for “secret center” also means “secret fires.” It is MVQD SVD = 220. I suspect that Hadit’s “secret ardours” are the same as Nuit’s “secret centre.” (Hadit is nondimensional, unextended, etc.; He cannot have “parts,” for he is the Indivisible. Therefore “his” secret ardours cannot be an aspect or appendage; they must be the whole of what He is, whether secret centre, the hidden fire, etc.)

“Kiss” implies mouth, but in a very sweet way. This probably is not Peh symbolism. It may be all poetry. How literally are we to take this imagery? Her mouth defines the western horizon, where she swallows all planets, Sun, Moon, and stars — the kokaviym — as they set. Are we to apply the “death = ecstasy” formula of the West, so that her kiss is really an ardent and affectionate swallowing of him in his annihilation? This imagery and symbolism “work” well enough, they are all adequately cognate with any full sexual union; are they what we are to use here?

Speaker and listener are confused here. The verse is addressed to Ankh-af-na-Khonsu; but was not the stélé his creation? Also, Nuit is apparently no longer speaking, because She is described in the third person. Is Aiwass again speaking on his own? This is fairly critical so that we know in the verse following whose “fold” we are talking about!

In Equinox of the Gods, AC described that verse 14 “seems to have been written in by me as a kind of appreciation of what she had just said.” This still does not make clear who “mine” refers to.

Wingèd globe and starry blue are, respectively, emblems of Hadit and Nuit. It would be stretching a bit — though not unreasonably — to see them as Nuit's words. They are better the words of an "outsider" (speaking in the mundane sense), an observer of these phenomena; and the attributes given are also the implements of a Chief Adept, an Adeptus Exemptus, of the old Order! If these are not Aiwass' words, I am beginning to think of them as AC's own, in a very high state.

GEMATRIA: "Naked splendour" is interesting. "Splendour" is likely HVD — which may be read, letter by letter, as, "the Star & the Queen (or Lover)." Of the various ways of saying "naked" in Hebrew, nigleh, NGLH, means "apparent, clear, revealed" — and refers to the Written and Oral Law. It therefore also has a Neshamah quality. It enumerates to 88. NGLH HVD = $88 + 15 = 103$ = ha-kokaviym, "the stars"! So the verse is literal — the gemmèd azure is the Naked Splendour: ha-kokaviym (103) = nigleh hod (103). 103 is also Bonaim, i.e. we are all counted among these stars. This is also the Rota Mundi.

I think I have got the basic feel of the verse — though some new questions are stirred up.

Crowley begins his commentary on this verse by remarking that this "poetic description of the symbolism of the stélé is suitable for such minds as approach Truth in this manner rather than by way of Science or Philosophy." I agree that, from that point of view, it is very powerful. He confirms that this ecstasy is in us, by saying, "it boasts the consummation of the marriage of Hadit and Nuit in the priest," by the freeing of Hadit from the veils of the Khu. He explains $0=2$ with respect to this wedding, such that 0 is the consequence in Mysticism, and 2 is the result in Magick; and the results of such Magick are always dual. That is, I combine fully with the Universe as I comprehend it, and we are both necessarily changed in the process. To the extent I have effectively altered the Universe, I have altered myself as its complement. It therefore provides an entirely new "courtship," as Lamed to Aleph.

(The verse may fit Daleth, as an emblem of love; but it clearly fits Chesed. "Wingèd globe" is a $7=4$ wand; "starry blue" is a Chesed symbol, as is "gemmèd azure." Note that this verse — and, to a certain extent, all verses since 11 — pertain to the stélé.)
(2/17/01 EV; amended 11/16/03 EV)

15. Now ye shall know that the chosen priest & apostle of infinite space is the prince-priest the Beast and in his woman, called the Scarlet Woman, is all power given. They shall gather my children into their fold: they shall bring the glory of the stars into the hearts of men.

(Geburan correspondences are interesting. Cf. v. 5 for a subtle similarity. Here we also get Scarlet Woman = Shakti = Shekinah = red pentagram, Ruby Star. Comparison to Heh, Path 15, is also fine. This verse continues the process of "defining the stélé," i.e. the officers of the Aeon.)

This is one of the two verses that most caught my attention the very first time I ever saw Liber L., for reasons explained elsewhere.

It defines the two governing officers of the Temple at this time, i.e. of the Great Order. The Beast and the Scarlet Woman are the Chokmah and Binah archetypes (probably reflected functionally into Chesed and Geburah, respectively). These are archetypes, not individuals. Germer understood this better than almost anyone. Even AC was not the Beast; but he was the avatar, and the closest to its center of Light in his lifetime — and perhaps beyond. These are tremendous archetypal powers that people scarcely begin to appreciate. I suppose the easiest way to represent them is that the Beast is a solar-phallic representation of Chokmah, and the Scarlet Woman is a lunar-ionic representation of Binah, both phrases taken at a very high level, surely Briatic. The “chosen priest & apostle of infinite space” is the priestly consciousness of Chokmah, the sphere of starfields.

GEMATRIA: In Greek, their names are To Mega Therion = 666 and Hé Kokkiné Guné = 667.

I believe that this Book is primarily to be taken on an archetypal level of interpretation. Only on occasion are the instructions pragmatic in the physical sense; and when its prophecies take on the quality of predictions, they are merely the precipitation of archetype into the World of Action. The practical implication of this is that the inner “Beast” and “Scarlet Woman” — the Chiah and Neshamah of each of us — are the real agencies meant in most such passages through the Book. In the present verse (especially in conjunction with the last phrase of the prior verse) is a kind of ordination, it seems — of AC and Rose C — but there is also a deeper idea than this.

“Infinite space,” we are explicitly told in v. 22, is Nuit. This is the “chosen priest & apostle of Nuit.” 666 is called a “prince-priest,” a traditional designation of royalty in Egypt and elsewhere. 667 is purely Shakti, even as 666 is cognate with Shiva. (Note 667 is Hebrew for the phrase “Secret of All Spiritual Activities,” related to Teth.) The last sentence of the verse is a beautiful promise, which certain ones have enacted; but it also refers, ultimately I believe, to the direct work of these archetypes operative in humanity during this Aeon.

Crowley’s New Comment (N.C.) gives his own definition of this role for himself — a “job description.” He also says 666 and 667 are “avatars of Tao and Téh, Shiva and Shakti.” In the level I am considering them, I would rather say that they are “variations on a theme” of Shiva and Shakti, highly specialized; and that they then have incarnate avatars. I am not so ready to say that the Beast is only one person, the man AC — although this was undeniably true in his lifetime.

AC’s remarks on “fold:” I find it interesting that I have never thought of this! I have always thought of “embrace.”

GEMATRIA: AC remarked that “prince-priest” is an anagram of Princeps Iter, “Wandering Prince” — which he related to “Alastor the Wanderer.” He also cites Princeps Erit, “He shall be chief.” Princeps = 90 = Perdurabo. Altogether = 138 = AYMA ALHYM; BN ALHYM; and several very important entries in Latin that have to be seen to be believed! I will list them here for those who read this: Custos Verbi, “Guardian of the Word”; Fraternitas R.C., “Fraternity R.C.”; mater et virgo, “mother and virgin”; Perseverantia, “perseverance” (the motto of —); Rex Iudaeorum, “King of the Jews”; and Valle Iosophat, “Valley of Jehosophat,” a mystical term used in alchemy and Freemasonry.

GEMATRIA: “Glory of the Stars.” Which word for “glory”? Although there are a lot of Hebrew words for glory (ZV, GDVLH, GAVN, KBVD, TzBY), kavod is the most common in Qabalistic Hebrew phrases. Based on this and a little examination, I see KBVD HKVKBYM as the best form. KBVD HKVKBYM = 135. In Hebrew, this number is not very interesting, except for a word meaning “congregation;” but Greek and Latin become more interesting. In Greek, 135 = doxa, “glory, splendor.” In Latin, this number relates to high functions within the Order and within the delivered process of initiation: It is Illuminatus, “illuminated;” both Caput Ordinis and Prolocutor; and Liber AL vel Legis.

(7/5/95 EV; additions 11/17/03 EV)

16. For he is ever a sun, and she a moon. But to him is the winged secret flame and to her the stooping starlight.
(Easily Tiphereth symbolism, in many ways.)

“Him” and “her” presumably refer to 666 & 667. (More broadly, this verse refers to the universal essence of male and female, of course.) There are documented astral confirmations of details given in this verse, however, for what is usually called “the solar body,” i.e. the mental body proper, which conforms to Greek ideals of beauty.

As already said, with reference to the prior verse, 666 is solar-phallic Wisdom, and 667 is lunar-yonic Understanding. This verse confirms it.

But the second sentence has a structural strangeness. “to him is... the flame” seems incomplete. Does it mean to him is attributed the winged flame? Or what? It seems adequately clear poetically, in a vague way, but does not hold up on critical grammatical analysis.

Broadly, it shows 666 = Sun corresponding somehow to Hadit, and 667 = Moon, corresponding somehow to Nuit.

Note also that Hadit is uniquely described as a “winged secret flame.” I previously postulated that “secret center” = “secret fire”; and this verse confirms that, too. It is another way of saying that Hadit is Yod. (4/3/95 EV; tweaked on various dates thereafter)

17. But ye are not so chosen

I have, over the years, formulated my own views on this verse; and suddenly, considering the likely correspondence of verse 17 either to Netzach or Zayin, Venus or The Lovers (Gemini, 17th Path), those views spring alive.

I have never accepted the apparent surface meaning of this verse. It is intuitively wrong. Every man and woman is a star, is expressed as a Sun or Moon, is a reflection of Nuit and of Hadit, etc.

I believe, instead, that there is a Qabalistic code here. “Ye” is YH [Yod-Heh]. The message of this verse is then the natural continuation from the prior verses! Together Yod and Heh, the Sun and Moon, are Not; therefore, they are the Chosen. Not the Sun or Moon divided, but the Lingam and Yoni united in an expression of Divine Will (YaH). This is very sacred and clear to me. It gives a clear continuation of the same theme from v. 15 through v. 19, and perhaps through v. 21. (4/3/95 EV)

18. Burn upon their brows, o splendrous serpent!

19. O azure-lidded woman, bend upon them!

A couplet. Pretty obvious in the meaning. Note, especially, that they form the Hexagram: He rises; She bends down. In my experience, the phenomena described in v. 19 are the natural consequence of v. 18 occurring, if “brows” is understood to be Ajna. An important formulation near the beginning of Liber Pleiades relies on this predictable phenomenon.

In the model from the Shiva Samhita, this serpent rising to the brow is solar — flowing from a Sun that is postulated as existing at the base of the spine — and the “bending down” of the goddess is the continual “raining” of a dew that precipitates from a Moon that is understood to rest within the skull or perhaps higher.

Not “his brows,” or “bend upon him;” but “their” and “them.” The antecedents are the lovers of the previous verses, evidently in their conjunction with each other. Hadit is the center of every star, and Nuit’s wedding with Him is in her wedding with each of us and all of us. This couplet is an invocation — no, more correctly a benediction.

v. 18 = Hod, “Splendor” and the kundalini serpent. 18 = ChTA, “the antique Serpent.” v. 19 = Yesod, the Moon, etc.; and cf. v. 9. Again, notice that this entire Beth series since v. 11 has been a description of the stélé! (11/18/03 EV)

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Continue to next verse. Liber L., Cap. 1, vv. 20-30

NUIT

20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
1-9 10-19 31-39 40-49 50-59 60-66

20. The key of the rituals is in the Secret word which I have given unto him
[NOTE 7/6/95: I have altered “secret” to “Secret,” in accordance with the original ms. I should reconsider this verse to see if this makes it look any different to me.]

Crowley always interpreted this as Abrahadabra. I have every reason to believe, and no reason to doubt, that this is true for the general meaning.

I must note, however, that there is an alternate and more individual meaning — that is even supported by the generic meaning of Abrahadabra. As a specific meaning, I believe the import of this verse is that, for any given magician, the key to that person’s rituals — to all of their Work — is in the secret word uniquely given them by their own HGA. That is, it is the result of 418 = the Knowledge & Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. Also, “secret word” = “secret will”; and even “secret” is likely (here) RTz, which connects to Chokmah. In my own case, that Word communicated turned out to be the key to the whole of the Work, and of tremendous value. There is also the “Word” encoded in AHVTY that was given later.

Beyond this, it has never been clearly worked out how Abrahadabra is the “key of the rituals.” We can take it broadly, though, in that this word declares 5=6; and we know that in (a) the union of the Microcosm and Macrocosm generally, and (b) of the Pentagram and Hexagram, and (c) with the HGA particularly are the real keys to ritual.

I have separately attempted to find a particular ritual formula in Abrahadabra and have (so far) failed. This may be too literal of a meaning; but (by the approach that comes to mind this afternoon) it would go something like this. Take out the 5 As (which form the Pentalpha) and you are left with BRHDBR = Mercury Sun Star Venus Mercury Sun. There is one interpretation, of great importance, given to these six letters in Liber Aleph. For the present, however, I proceed differently. Mercury and the Sun are together at beginning and end, as though a solar-phallic invocation of the Logos, Thoth, &c.; Two forms of the fertile mother are in the center. The planets in the formula correspond to the sephirothic triad Hod-Netzach-Tiphereth, with the starlight of the Supernals beyond. Thus, there is a preliminary invocation by the Pentalpha (A) followed by a Solar-Mercurial working (BR); then a general invocation (Rousing of the Citadels?) = A, and so on. It still has a lot of work to be done. I have not yet found the underlying myth.

There is another tremendously important interpretation here. The Rosicrucian [Rose Cross] lamen is called “the key of sigils and rituals.” It is the “key of sigils” because of certain patterns on the Rose; and “the key of the rituals” because it displays the keys to the Pentagram and Hexagram rituals upon the Cross. Thus, we again have “the key of the rituals” known to AC as a union of the 5 and the 6, and displayed in the form of the Rosy Cross. Given the jargon AC learned in the R.R. et A.C., this verse can easily be paraphrased as, “The Rosy Cross is in the secret word which I have given unto him.”

This fulfills all interpretations that have been discussed above.

Furthermore, this particular Rosy Cross is also “the key to the Vault,” which was “built for a compendium of the Universe.”

AC’s analysis of Abrahadabra has not been given enough attention.

I note 5 = AGAPH and 6 = ThELHMA (number of letters [in Greek]).

AC Qabalistically translates Abrahadabra with the following phrases:

(various formulations of the G.'W'.)

Light + Voice = Vision & Voice

(and “by names and images are all powers awakened and reawakened”)

The Word of Double Power

“Light, Life & Love”

Amoun, Thoth, Isis, Horus, Osiris (Aleph, Beth, Daleth, Heh, Resh)

-- old formulation, presumes Heh = Emperor

The Essence of IAO

[This verse 20 would be attributed to Malkuth. This is appropriate because it is climactic. It is a completion. This entire decade of verses has referred to the Stélé; and in the final verse, the essence of R.H.K., the Rosy Cross, is made clear in the climactic verse, in the Word of the Aeon. (If 20 = Yod, “secret word” are both Hermit ideas.)]

Let us hold the position that Abracadabra is a corruption of Abrahadabra. This being so, the most likely route of corruption is that Cheth was mistakenly substituted for Heh. Thus, Abracadabra would be 421.

Taken again, C is Sigma, hinting at a prior Abrasadabra. In Greek, this would be 413. It wanders from the premise, but hints both at the Abrasax origin often credited, and at another far more interesting possibility; for Sad is very likely, in this scenario, a corruption of the Hebrew Sod! Thus, that which is hidden in the middle is Sod, The Mystery — certainly equivalent to Hadit. Now, in the Greek, substituting F (the Vav equivalent) for the central A gives ABRASFDABRA = 418!

The Hebrew root ABR means, “to strive upward, to mount, to soar.” This is characteristic of advice in both of the first two Chapters, advice to the spiritual aspirant. From it, ABRHM, Abraham, was the classic father-figure of Judaism, the Hebraic “Amoun-made-flesh.” Gesenius translates ABRM as “father of elevation,” and ABRHM as “father of a multitude.” I note, though, that BRH or BRA is probably the real root here, not ABR; so the idea of “creation” underlies the name, and a kind of pun results from adding the Aleph to the front, as “Creative father.”

The root BRA is basically “to cut, to carve out” etc., hence creation. BRH is “to cut, to cut asunder.” Both are involved with cutting as the mode of creation. (Besides “carving,” is this also a C-section?) BRA is explicitly “to beget” and (passively) “to be born.”

But wandering back to a previous route, Abracadabra could have been an easy corruption of [Greek] Abrachadabra (by Romans, not by Greeks) which is as easy a

confusion for Abraxadabra. This suggests, again, an Abraxas origin.

Of these possibilities, I am really intrigued by the SVD origin.

NF + AD = 56 + 5 = 61. Together, they are “nothing.” See I:21.

NV + VAD = 56 + 11 = 67, giving birth to “the Twins.”

Return to SVD. I have frequently, of late, been advised or reminded that this word summarizes all of the symbolism of Teth. I suspect an understanding of it, letter-by-letter, will be important to my grasp of the 19th Path. For now I note that the symbolism of Teth subsumes the Shiva-Shakti formula — Nu + Had on a different level — also summarized in the old form of Teth as [circle with X through it], a classic glyph of Nu + Had and the resulting birth of their Child — every bit as much as [Sun glyph]. (SVD, 70, = “Adam & Eve.”)

SVD is literally “a couch, cushion,” whence, “a sitting together, assembly,” whence, “a deliberation,” whence, “a secret!” What a convoluted evolution! (Put this in HGA terms, however!) The root SVG, sug, means, “to hedge about” (a Cheth idea). There may also be a relationship to ShVT, essentially a whip or scourge. (7/5/95 EV)

21. With the God & the Adorer I am nothing: they do not see me. They are as upon the earth[;] I am Heaven, and there is no other God than me, and my lord Hadit.

Thus begins the third series. Whether as 1, or 21, this would be a Kether idea. Is it so? I think it safest to say that it is the wedding of Kether and Ain Soph Aur. (It does not particularly fit the 21st Path of Kaph.)

When asked why the 4° of Temple of Thelema is called “Adorer” rather than “Adorant,” I have remarked that “Adorant” is a title given to Osiris (I:49). Somehow I had missed that “Adorer” is actually a title attributed in The Book of the Law to Hadit.

Nuit is here unambiguously shown to be Heaven, in contrast to those who are “upon the earth.” She is also Ultimate Deity, Infinite Deity. But there is a paradox here. We learn in II:4 that “she shall be known;” but a superficial reading of this verse says she is unseen. Now, the two do not literally contradict each other, but I have always taken, and still take, the nature of Nuit to be the Seen, whereas Hadit is the Unseen. She is every detail of the manifest universe (v. 1), every “extended” phenomenon encountered for experience. She would not be seen, however, in her entirety. I think part of what is being said here is that even She, the Seen, is incomprehensible in her entirety, being Infinite. She cannot be wholly seen.

But there is another aspect. Twice, this verse talks about a union between Had and Nu. Let me take these one at a time.

The latter of these phrases could be taken, and usually is taken, to define Nuit and Hadit as two distinct Gods, and the ultimate Gods. They are, after all, the two complementary ideas of the illimitable — the Infinite and the Infinitesimal. But, “God” is

here singular; and, especially in the terms of the previous several verses, this is more easily read that “there is no other God than me, and my lord,” i.e., no God other than the Union of Nuit and Hadit. Once more we are confronted with the Formula of the Rosy Cross. It is this Union that is the ultimate God.

The opening phrase then means not only that Nuit is Naught, but that she is Naught with Hadit. Again, is it their Union that returns to the original ZERO? She alone is All, and it is easy to demonstrate All = Zero; but I think the idea here is that the true sublime ZERO is the consequence of their wedding. Hermetically, this reflects into the lives of individuals very meaningfully.

It is also clear that this is so when Hadit is the Adorer. The Great God adores and loves and desires every aspect of the Great Goddess. His constant Going is an eternal enjoyment of every inch of her, so to speak — an encounter unending, with every aspect of her.

Are “the God” and “the Adorer” separate? They are referred to as “They.” My immediate impression is that this differentiates between Hadit and that person at whose center Hadit abides, i.e. two ways of viewing the same point of view.

Nor is Hadit “on the earth,” but merely “as on the earth.” Is this but a relativistic comparison?

AC agrees that, “The importance of this verse lies in the assertion of the metaphysical entity of Our Lady, Her incomprehensibility to normal sense.” That is, we uniquely experience each aspect of Her; but without losing ourselves utterly within Her, there is no total comprehension of Her. (That is an important meditation assignment alone — striving to comprehend the utter illimitableness and unknowableness of her. Cf. Liber 536 for a variation.) (2/18/01 EV)

22. Now therefore I am known to ye by my name Nuit, and to him by a secret name which I will give him when at last he knoweth me[.] Since I am Infinite Space and the Infinite Stars thereof, do ye also thus. Bind nothing! Let there be no difference made among you between any one thing & any other thing; for thereby there cometh hurt. Actually a simple verse. Let us begin with its more overt meaning.

(It is quite easy to establish the Chokmah quality of this verse. Verses 2, 12, and 22 have all clearly spoken of the heavens and of space. The number 22 is less obvious, except that it reinforces the “circle” idea in an especially Chokmah-ish way. There is no especial relationship to the 22nd Path — I will drop that idea from consideration.)

The previous verse spoke of how Nuit is known to “the God and the Adorer.” They do not see her. This verse, however, declares how the aspirant knows her. There are at least three levels of interpretation that come readily to mind.

First, and most literally, she gives her exoteric name as Nuit. This name we may propagate and use generally for teaching, and for the propagation of Thelema. To Crowley she promised a “secret name.” Despite the apparent hint in the initials I.S.I.S., AC was quite clear (someplace) that this Name was Babalon, and that he learned it in the skrying of the 2nd Aethyr, ARN. (Isis is perhaps a clue to the avenue of attainment, however, i.e. Gimel.)

Second, we must remember that this entire chapter is, especially for the Man of Earth (well, also especially for the Adeptus Minor) a dramatization of the love of the HGA. It is the HGA who gives to each “a secret name... when at last he knoweth me.” A deep lesson to learn is that taught in Liber Causae — to understand, when hearing the name of any god, only the Name of that GOD known personally to oneself. As there is no God other than Nuit and her lord Hadit, they are, of course, “stand-ins” for the HGA as much as is R.H.K.; but R.H.K. is the visible object of worship, etc., and They (Nu and Had = 65) are more for those who have penetrated more deeply. Thus, this verse also assures the individual aspirant that the HGA will one day privately disclose a Name (i.e., a formula) that is Secret — RTz or SVD, in their superficial and their deep meanings. In the meantime, the love of the Angel can be represented to all by the name Nuit.

Thirdly, I note that this is the name by which She is known to “ye.” I again suspect that this veils Yod Heh, YAH. Nuit is known to man and woman (or other gender variations of “uniting opposites”) conjoined. There is also a deeper solitary meaning wherein the alchemy of Will and Love, Wisdom and Understanding, is completed essentially within oneself. (NOTE: Remember that “ye” is the plural second person personal pronoun (vous). It does not address an individual except as part of a plural. “Thee” is the accusative case of “you” in the singular, and in the nominative only in irregular situations or when used by the Quakers. The nominative of the singular (tu) is “thou;” its possessive is “thy;” and the absolute form of “thy” is “thine,” used also before an initial vowel or h.)

By any of these interpretations, the real key to getting beyond the first layer of exposure is to really know her, to have knowledge of her, as of the HGA.

There then follows an instruction fundamental to the deep philosophy of the Book. It is, foremost, an instruction in tolerance. In no way is it a call for suspending discrimination on its own plane. But all illusions are equal. It is a high instruction in mystical technique and in morality. It is also an instruction in government, as able as any in the Tao Téh Ching (which I consider the world’s finest textbook in political science). Together, all of us (that “ye” again) are to “Bind nothing!” etc. Pain comes from arbitrary separation, division, intolerance, nonacceptance, etc. Sorrow is the consequence of duality.

But through all of this, let us not forget that Nuit already says to us, “I am known to ye.” The tense is present, the hour is “Now.” Whatever promises of deeper knowledge come in the future, this knowledge — as is made more clear in other places, including all of Liber Tzaddi — is available to all now, this very hour.

I note in AC's New Comment (N.C.) that he attributes the disclosure of the secret name to the vision of the 12th Aethyr, LOE (where the correct spelling is given for the first time).

I am very taken with his statement: "To 'make no difference' as ordained is to regard the whole of the non-Ego or universe apparently external to the Self as a single phenomenon." (4/3/95 EV)

23. But whoso availeth in this, let him be the chief of all!
DEFINITION: Avail. v. intr. 1. To be of use, value, or advantage; serve.

I consider this a continuation of the last verse, so I will address them together.

The words "chief of all" may be read "Chief of AL." It is a kind of appointment. It also veils another meaning, declared in the final point of the [—] ritual.

But — aside from all the other things that can be said here about government — note that this is not an exclusive ordination. Anyone who "availeth in this" is appointed as "the chief of all." (On the flip side it means that only a real initiate should be in charge of anything of consequence; but that's another story!)

The word "avail" has never received adequate attention here. Despite my knowledge of language, I long contextually accepted it essentially to mean, "succeed." I think others read it that way also. But it has no such meaning. It is used here intransitively, and means, "to be of use, value, or advantage; to serve." Its root means, "to be strong," and gives such secondary ideas of "value, worth," etc. The meaning here is not only "whoso is thus strong," but especially, "whoso thus serves." It is an unusual usage of the word "avail." The closest contemporary use is probably, "whoso maketh himself or herself thus available."

GEMATRIA: For "chief of all," check the following:

princeps omnium = 165 (cf. Nun Heh Mem A'ayin, NEMO)
princeps toti = 148
caput omnium = 130
caput toti = 113

Until I get my notebook and check, I am inclined to interpret this as 165 = NHMO. This confirms the use of omnis rather than totus. That is, here is meant "Chief of the Whole," moreso than "Chief of Everything."

Later: As noted above, princeps omnium (165) is equal to "Nemo" spelled with Greek or Hebrew characters. Princeps toti (148) corresponds to BNY ALHYM and NTzCh, but neither impresses me overly much. Caput omnium (130), however, gives several interesting correspondences. In Latin it is also Deus est homo; primum mobile; and

other related phrases, albeit of less impact. In Hebrew it also gives several words reflecting attainment and office. Caput toti (113) produces several Latin phrases, but none that exactly hit the mark; in Hebrew it gives ehben bokhan, ABN BChN, "a tried stone."

(4/3/95 EV)

24. I am Nuit and my word is six and fifty

(Is this v. 24 related to Chesed? It is not so immediately obvious to me except that the idea of measuring and counting is inherent to Chesed. For example, v. 4 addressed infinite expansion.).

The simple explanation here is very obvious. The name NV = 56.

I have always felt it must be overwhelmingly significant that these are the letters of Scorpio and Taurus; but I have never felt that I had grasped the full importance of this. I believe there are very deep meanings here.

One of them is the sexual significance of this Venus-Mars axis, a formula of the Rosy Cross.

On a purely astrometric basis, the true defining axis of the zodiac, Aldebaran-Antares, is the Taurus-Scorpio axis; and Taurus is, truly, the first sign of the zodiac. NV (i.e. Scorpio-Taurus) defines, in our system, the body of space.

For years I argued that Tzaddi must correspond to Atu XVII, The Star, because NV (Nun Vav) is, literally, "Fish (N) Hook (V)" = Tz (Fish-Hook). I note this here despite the fact that I have long since abandoned that Tarot attribution. (There is a deeper meaning to this "Nu = Fishhook" that comes from the consequences of the practices assigned to The Emperor in the Practicus Grade of A.'.A.'.)

56 is part of the 7 series ($2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 7$). This can be analyzed in various ways. Most simply, I note that such key Venus numbers as 7 and 28 are among its factors; and that 56 is visibly related to $156 = \text{Babalon} = [\text{graphically represented as on the A.'.A.'. sigil}]$
 $77 + (7+7)/7 + 77$.

56 is the number of cards in the Minor Arcana plus Court Courts, i.e. those cards which are ascribed to the elements. Only the 22 Trumps (the circle of Hebrew letters) are excluded from this numeration.

In Hebrew there are a few wonderful correspondences to this number including: MAVT, the Egyptian mother-goddess; NAH, one spelling of nah, "beautiful;" AYM H, "dread, terror," reflecting the dark aspect, vs. YVM, yoom, "to be warm, bright;" thus the twin phases of the Mother.

In Latin we have many words of glory (including gloria), but seemingly more related to the Tipheric idea (e.g. Adonis and agnus); but here also are terra, "earth," and Pleias, any one of the Seven Daughters of Atlas. There is more.

Although Volo Noscere is written in Latin, I suspect Frater V.N. (who had no knowledge, as far as I know, of the Latin Qabalah Simplex) had a fond relationship to the number 56.

Additionally, I am very taken with a detail of Hebrew grammar. Nuit did not simply indicate, "my number is 56." She said it was "six and fifty." In Hebrew this phrase is written VVN, Vav ve-Nun, and enumerates to 62. This can be explored separately; it is preeminently 2x31.

Later: I was considering the full phrase, "I am Nuit," as a magical formula. Nu, of course, is 31 in Latin (cf. the Hebrew negation LA), long ago determined. It mirrors Had = 13 (cf. Hebrew AChD, "unity"). "I am Nuit" is Ego Nu:

Ego	25	(= D.D.S.)
Nu	31	(= V.N.)
	56	!!!

(10/21/00 EV)

25. Divide, add, multiply and understand.

A continuation of the foregoing. Crowley's analysis is mostly to the point.

Divide: $6/50 = 0.12$, i.e., 0 [point] 1 2 : the circumference of Nuit, the Naught; the point of Hadit; the unity proceeding, R.H.K.; and the 2 which AC interpreted as the Coptic H (by shape), the life breath in its twin cycle of inspiration and expiration. I note that 1, 2 can be Heru-Ra-Ha then divided into the twins. I also see 0 [point] 1 2 as the formulation of the Tree of Life from the Nonexistent through the phases of the Yod (Kether and Chokmah).

Add: $50+6 = 56$ as before; and $5+6 = 11$, with Abrahadabra and all the other attributions. From my own list I note it is also the number of letters of ThELEMA + AGAPE. As the circle = 22 by convention, the semi-circle (Nuit arched from horizon to horizon) is 11. $5+6 =$ union of Pentagram & Hexagram. In Hebrew AVD, the Magick Light (or Solar Magick Current), essentially the kundalini; ChG, a circularity of form or motion; and in Latin, AL.

Multiply: $6 \times 50 = 300 =$ Shin = Ruach Elohim. From my list I note that $300 = \text{Sum}(0-24)$, referring to the 24th Path of Nun, Scorpio; and it was in the 24th verse that this mystery began to be declared. 300 is also $10 \times 5 \times 6$, Trigrammaton (YHV) by multiplication. It is also Resh + Qoph, one way of writing Sun + Moon (by Tarot); so that Resh, Qoph, and Shin ($200+100=300$) are clearly the important triad of Sun, Moon, and Fire. 300 is Elohim spelled in greater plenitude, and She is a basic formula of Nuit both as Mother

and as Pentagram. In Greek, 300 is ThHBAIOS, “Theban;” and SR, the notariqon of STAUROS RODION, “Rosy Cross.”

I have considered why division was not taken in the opposite direction, $50/6 = 8.333... (8 \frac{1}{3})$. This equilibrates the 8 and the 3. Also, the 11 further reduces to $2 = A.'.A.'$, among other things.

AC goes deeper, in his New Comment, into the individual analysis of the 6 and 50 in and of themselves. I note a special relationship to the Esoteric Name of the Order; for 6 is a number readily related to Tiphereth, and 50 to Binah. (AC does it specifically as $50 = N = \text{Dragon, or Serpent of Infinite Space}$; $6 = \text{Sun} = \text{one (of each) of the Infinite Stars thereof}$.)

I also believe this v. 25 has an entirely different sense that is not related to numbers at all. Not at all. The words, “divide, add, multiply” refer to the process whereby procreation occurs. After a division of the genetic material of each parent into an egg and sperm, they are added (united); the parents multiply, i.e., bear fruit. From this triad — “divide, add, multiply” — we are instructed to “understand,” i.e., to learn the real meaning of life. (There are, of course, yoga practices of pure consciousness that parallel the foregoing biological operation.) (2/19/01 EV)

26. Then saith the prophet and slave of the beauteous one: Who am I, and what shall be the sign.[?] So she answered him, bending down, a lambent flame of blue, all-touching all penetrant, her lovely hands upon the black earth & her lithe body arched for love and her soft feet not hurting the little flowers[:] Thou knowest! And the sign shall be my ecstasy, the consciousness of the continuity of existence, the om-nipresence of my body.

(Transparently a Tiphereth verse. Notice that this series, from v. 21, has been very descriptive of Nuit. This is more consistent with the Gimel theme of this set of ten verses.)

I do not feel a need to find any hidden meanings in this verse. It is poetic and rich indeed; but its message is utterly simple: Crowley asks, “Who am I?” Nuit answers, “Thou knowest!”

He also asks, “What shall be the sign?” She answers that it shall be, “my ecstasy, the consciousness of the continuity of existence, the omnipresence of my body.” And we know that her ecstasy is in ours. (Originally her words were given as, “the non-atomic unfragmentary fact of my universality.” Aiwass permitted a paraphrase, although this quote remains visible in the original ms.)

This is very clear. It is a statement of the phenomena of attainment, as clear as — probably clearer than — that given in any of the classics.

Remember that, to each aspirant, the Voice of Nuit here given is a representative of the

Voice of the HGA. These are the phenomena of attainment.

Note that AC was given a taste of this; for Nuit was “all-touching, all-penetrant.” (I also note in passing that, even during this samadhi, the earth is described as black, not green. This supports what we have discovered in T.'O.'T.' to be true, i.e. functional.)

GEMATRIA: “Thou knowest,” in Latin, is scis = 46, q.v. $\text{Sum}(0-46) = 1,081 = \text{ThPARTh}$ (Tiphereth). In Latin, 46 is equally the value of Ceres, Cybele, and flos (“flower”); of I.N.R.I. and of Theban; of omnia, “all;” ordo, “the Order;” and ros, “dewdrop.”)

Crowley is the “slave of the beautiful one.” That is, he is not yet the willing servant of that which he Knows in Tiphereth. (7/5/95 EV; revised 11/22/03 EV)

27. Then the priest answered & said unto the Queen of Space, kissing her lovely brows, and the dew of her light bathing his whole body in a sweet-smelling perfume of sweat[:]
O Nuit, continuous one of Heaven, let it be ever thus that men speak not of Thee as One but as None and let them speak not of thee at all since thou art continuous.
(There is sufficient Venus here to consider this a Netzach verse about lovers.)

Very little need to comment. Over a decade of performance of Liber XV was a far deeper meditation on this verse than anything I could do in many days.

Most of it is straightforward.

In the last verse, AC was a prophet. Here he is a priest, an intermediary, a worshipper. Nuit gains her epithet, “Queen of Space.” Certain phenomena are described.

He has realized her continuity. He has also given voice to the doctrine of Zero as transcending One. (Previously, in I:21, she described herself as the Naught; here, the priest attempts to establish her worship according to that view.) He also recognizes that here, verily, is GOD; and that anything said of her at all is deficient. (4/3/95 EV)

28. None, breathed the light, faint & faery, of the stars, and two.
A continuation of the last verse, establishing the 0=2 doctrine. (0=2 is another way of saying Zero = Infinity as well.)

GEMATRIA: “light... of the stars” (faint & faery as it is) is aur ha-kokaviym: $207 + 103 = 310$. No particular correspondences; but note a further KVKB reference in a Hod verse.

Note that Nuit (alike with the HGA) is represented as LIGHT, L.V.X. It is a breathing Light, a high understanding of Ruach. The “breath of the Light” is ruach ha-aur, RVCh HAVR = 426.

On further consideration, I note that there is a kind of reversal of the symbolism of vv.

27 and 28. In v. 27, AC tries to establish a point purely of Gñana Yoga. In v. 28, Nuit tells him not to miss the Bhakti Yoga perspective. These conform to the Mercury correspondence to the number 27, and the Venus correspondence to 28.

I am also beginning to think I have the Hebrew correspondences backwards. They should perhaps run Aleph to Tav. Thus, the first 10 are the coming forth from the Naught of Harpocrates' minister; the second 10 are the symbolism of the Caduceus; and in this third 10 we have clear symbolism of the Priestess, Gimel, and beautiful moonlight. (4/3/95 EV)

29. For I am divided for love's sake, for the chance of union.

30. This is the creation of the world that the pain of division is as nothing, and the joy of dissolution all.

These two verses continue what was begin in v. 27. It is one of the doctrines best understood by me, and most cited, in the 15 years since I first began the serious study of this Book.

Aside from their very pure and general meaning, I should mention that these two verses always seemed to be the key to understanding everything necessary about the 17th Path of Zayin.

(The verses correspond to their Sephiroth adequately. In particular, v. 30 corresponds to Malkuth by describing "the creation of the world." It is also clear that, once more, the decade completed, an entire thematic section of the Book is concluded. Verse 31 takes off on a whole new track. The next section, related perhaps to Daleth and the number 4, deals with the establishment of Law.)

Many subtleties can be discerned from this by even casual reflection, once the essential point is understood; but they are probably not worth recording, since anyone can find them as easily.

AC's commentaries to v. 29 are important especially for his discussion of Samadhi, and of how it discloses, by experience, the essential principles articulated in this Book. (4/3/95 EV)

Return to TOP of page.

Continue to next verse.Liber L., Cap. 1, vv. 31-39

NUIT

31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
1-9	10-19	20-30	40-49	50-59	60-66			

31. For these fools of men and their woes care not thou at all! They feel little; what is, is

balanced by weak joys: but ye are my chosen ones.

(Again, "fools" appears in a Kether verse. Thus begins what I now believe is the Daleth series.)

This is the first of several verses that seem to differentiate between Thelemites and others, and that seem to disparage compassion. This is an illusion. We have already been instructed that such a dualistic perspective is not what is taught in this Book.

In many ways this verse is straightforward. It does not counsel one not to care but, rather, to realize that a great deal of sympathy and pity is wasted. Crowley had characterized himself in his earlier poem "Perdurabo" as a person who feels things more acutely than most people — and this tends to be true of many initiates as well. But to each is given what they are capable of receiving, and it seems true that those incapable of perceiving great joy are incapable of perceiving truly great pain. We should not get caught up in our own projections about their suffering.

The converse, of course, is true as well. The initiate that becomes capable of receiving great joy becomes equally capable of accepting, acknowledging, and admitting (i.e. receiving) vast pain. Fortunately, the perspective on it is different.

It is interesting that "thou" is succeeded by "ye." I can only make sense of this by reading it that each of us is addressed individually at first, and together second. Note again how attainment or joy is equated not to the individual but to a plurality or collective.

AC says it very nicely: "This thesis concerning compassion is of the most palmary importance in the ethics of Thelema. It is necessary that we stop, once and for all, this ignorant meddling with other people's business. Each individual must be left free to follow his own path." (4/3/95 EV)

32. Obey my prophet! follow out the ordeals of my knowledge! seek me only! Then the joys of my love will redeem ye from all pain. This is so: I swear it by the vault of my body; by my sacred heart and tongue; by all I can give, by all I desire of ye all.
(A Chokmah verse, refers to the prophet, 666.)

Nuit gives bottom-line instructions. She promises results. She then seals this promise with a very firm pledge.

The promise is very simple: The result of the assigned practice is that the joys of Nuit's love will redeem us all from all pain.

So simple. So complete. So desirable.

Of course, per verse 22 - exactly ten verses back! - there is no difference to be made between the pain and the love. It is clear that the present "come on" would not serve as

an inducement to any who had thus "availed" of that instruction. But that is more or less the point. Such a person would already have attained the reward here offered.

The technical method prescribed has three steps.

"Obey my prophet!"

"follow out the ordeals of my knowledge!"

"seek me only!"

Here is a complete curriculum of Thelemic mysticism.

In v. 26 we accepted that Nuit's prophet refers to AC. This is seemingly confirmed elsewhere in the Book, and by the circumstances of its dictation; nor does it offend the powers of reason.

I am compelled (by His hand who writes for me) to observe that the phrase "Obey my [i.e. Nuit's] prophet!" means to obey the HGA who is, to each, the sole prophet of Nu. This is a specific meaning only of value to the Adept. The real inner Hierophant is the HGA; but AC took the role of outer Hierophant for those who still need such a thing (which should mean all non-Adepts).

So I believe, to the Adept, the instruction is "Obey the HGA," and to the Man of Earth it is to follow the instructions provided by 666.

Steps (2) and (3) are closely related. They merge quickly. To seek Her only is to encounter, experience, and "follow out" the ordeals of Her knowledge (i.e. of the progressive union with Her).

Again, this is an instruction for the Adeptus Minor directly from and concerning the HGA, and the promise is the same.

"Obey" derives from the Latin root oboedire literally means, "to listen to," from ob + audire.

Nuit's oath is the final item of this verse. She swears by all that She is. Note that her "sacred heart and tongue" is also her "secret centre," Hadit (v. 6).

Oaths are normally taken on that which one regards as sacred or otherwise special. Nuit is thus communicating the sacredness of the vault of her body (which at least means the arch of heaven), and of Hadit; as well as all that we exchange with Her, i.e. all that She can give, and all that she desires of us all. This verse is of obvious teaching value.

In passing, note AC's dicta (about a magical order) that "every organization must have a highly-centralized control."

This verse should also be read with the following Qabalistic puns in mind: "me" =

[Greek] MH, "not;" "all" also = [Hebrew] AL. (4/3/95 EV)

33. Then the priest fell into a deep trance or swoon & said unto the Queen of Heaven
Write unto us the ordeals write unto us the rituals write unto us the law.
(Binah: He consults the goddess to learn the pattern or form of the Order. Three points
of definition.)

The previous verse had its effect on the scribe, who is here referred to as the priest.
The word "swoon" tells us this is not samadhi. His personality, his ego-structure, is
overwhelmed by what he is hearing. The need for definition and precision is a classic
example of the ego's need to try to hold onto something substantial in the face of feeling
all its moorings slip.

And what he seeks are three points of definition of the Order; and a good three they are.
In designing T.'.O.'.T.'. , we had to prepare the rituals, the tasks to be completed, and the
Rules & Regulations — everything else was supplemental. I can certainly understand
A.C.'s desire to receive these from Nuit while he had Her attention. (4/3/95 EV)

34. But she said the ordeals I write not the rituals shall be half known and half
concealed: the Law is for all

35. This that thou writest is the threefold book of Law
(Chesed and Geburah complete the definition of the Law.)

He asked for law; She gave him Law. Nothing human-made, no manner of legal artifice,
but divine and natural Law.

This verse 34 is one of the most important for Thelemites to understand early. The
ordeals are distinctive for each person. The rituals have some parts that are common
for everyone, and some parts that are different for everyone. The Law is universal.

The ordeals are written not, because they cannot be prewritten. They are enforced by
the need of the aspirant. They are written not, i.e. by Nuit. We might say this is She in
Her aspect of Lamed. We can also easily see it as the HGA. The key point is that the
ordeals are necessarily unique for each person.

The rituals can be known according to form, but not "written" as to essence. This must
be discovered by each in his or her practice.

The Law — this Book of Law — is for all. It is Liber Legis, or Sepher ha-Torah. It is the
code of the microcosm and the macrocosm; of humanity, nature, and the universe.

AC's Old Comment is entirely rubbish. He just didn't understand it yet in 1907! It is
technically correct, however, to say, as he did in the N.C., that, "The Ordeals are at
present carried out unknown to the Candidate by the Secret Magick Power of the

Beast." By this we must understand the Solar Logos, 666, the Chokmah Archetype. This is synonymous with what I have written above.

I must add that the presence of these "unwritten" ordeals, unique for each, does not abrogate the system of common standards of examination for all. The real ordeals occur "in between the lines." Also, though this pure definition especially fits A.'.A.', experience shows it also has abundant relevance in a system like T.'.O.'.T.'. where more precise guidance is given to beginners.

AC's discussion of these ordeals in N.C., v. 34, is quite excellent.

NOTES TO MYSELF: Does the original punctuation change the meaning? (7/5/95 EV)

36. My scribe Ankh-af-na-khonsu the priest of the princes shall not in one letter change this book; but lest there be folly, he shall comment thereupon by the wisdom of Ra-Hoor-Khu-it.

Now we come to a more demanding verse.

(First: It is a verse of Tiphereth, with reference both to A-A-N-K by a Tipheric title, and to R.H.K.)

This has always been taken as referring to AC. Does this interpretation hold up? He is unquestionably the "scribe," so he is thus identified with Ankh-af-na-Khonsu. Okay, this settles the matter. Where the Beast (in I:15) is called "prince-priest," Ankh-af-na-Khonsu is called "priest of the princes." This is a related, but different, title. At the very least, however, it is an ordination: AC is declared by Nuit to be priest. It is unclear whether "of" means he comes from "the princes," or that he is for "the princes."

He is commanded not to alter even one letter. This is not all that unusual in holy books, as I recall. (It is certainly the fundamentalist attitude ingrained into Crowley concerning the Bible during his youth.) Ultimately, the Book is to be left to speak for itself. But the scribe is specifically enjoined to comment upon it, "lest there be folly." That is, he is to establish a certain sanity as to the general sense of it. His comment is not to be from his own intellect. It is to be "by the wisdom of Ra-Hoor-Khu-it."

This is the first time R.H.K. appears in the Book as such, although H.P.K. appeared in verse 7. The name is parsed so that we cannot miss its significance. Ra-Hoor is the Sun and Mars (thus Tiphereth and Geburah, the formula, presumably, of 5=6 and 6=5). "Khu" shows that He is of the nature of the Khu, i.e. He becomes visible in a human aspect alike unto our own. "-It" is this Book's deific terminative. He is, thus, both a specific God, described well in Cap. III, and also a reflection of the HGA. It is by the HGA's Wisdom that AC was instructed to comment hereupon. Also:

RA-HVVR 418

KV 26

444

IT 19

463 The Middle Pillar, Sushumna, &c.;

AC was charged to make a truly initiated commentary, to displace the windbags ("folly") who would spill their idiocy. (4/3/95 EV)

37. Also the mantras and spells; the obeah and the wanga; the work of the wand and the work of the sword: these he shall learn and teach.

(N.B. Until this very hour [of the original 1994 meditations], I never once associated my Probationer Aspiration Name, D.E.I., with this phrase!)

It is perfectly clear from this verse that AC was given a mandate to "learn and teach." However, past this one certainty is great room for dispute as to what his curriculum was to be!

"the mantras and spells," most simply, implies the esoteric methods of the East and West, respectively.

"the obeah and the wanga": Obeah is clearly understood, being the methods arising out of Africa, and most commonly related to Voudoun. (The word is a Creolized smushing together of the West African dibia and the Twi bayifo, both of which refer to a type of naturopathic shaman. The word is most common in the West Indies and up into the Carolinas.) Of all the world's systems, it is one of the few major ones AC never did "learn and teach." He related this term as well to AVB; and there are those who see in this word a general Pagan implication. I would not give so broad nor so misdirected (nor so irresponsible) a meaning. I see absolutely no reason not to take it literally and suggest that, whereas "mantras and spells" refers to Asia and Europe, "obeah" refers to Africa. Ultimately, all of the world's systems are to be assimilated into these teachings.

"Wanga" is a Central African (Congo &c.;) word that refers to magick in general and, especially, to particular types of charged charms, talismans, potions, and powders of that tradition, and the magical means of creating and implementing them. In the New World the word took root in Haiti and spread to New Orleans.

If I were to render "obeah" into Hebrew it would be AVBYH, Light [AVB] + Will [YH], $9+15 = 24$. "Wanga" implies VANGA = 61; or with Heh, 65, Adonai. But I am not persuaded. In Latin, OBEAH = 29 (Hadi, via, magia, &c.;;). VANGA = 40 (Aum Ha, Hadi, Hecate, Set, Sol, &c.;;) It is interesting to me that "Hadi" shows (in different languages) for each.

Wand and sword probably refer to Will and Mind. They have clear distinctions between them, as in the "natural vs. invoked" quality of the Aces of these suits; or the Divine vs. the human psychological; mystical vs. magical, etc.

Again, I am not too worried about the exact curriculum here; only that a diverse, and

likely world-spanning, array of magical and mystical subjects was to be part of what he taught. The Law alone was not adequate; he was enjoined to teach these many subjects, as a part of the program.

AC, of course, had his own interpretation of these subjects. I am not persuaded by his discussion of this; nor do I think it matters much. His Old Comment summed it up nicely: "An entirely new system of magic [sic] is to be learnt and taught as is now being done." Ultimately, he admitted ignorance of the details.

I am, however, very taken with the following from the New Comment:

The Equinox and Magick are full of instructions on all these matters in great detail, and the student must make them his guide.

But I feel bound to observe that they must be studied merely as classics, just as a musician studies Bach and others. He cannot compose by copying or combining their words; they serve him only as indications of the art of expression. He must master the technique, theory, and practice, of music, till the general principles are absorbed, and he has command of the language, to use it to express his Will.

So with Magick; the student must understand and assimilate the basic propositions, and he must be expert in the drill of the practical detail.

[and so forth...] [good stuff]

It is also here that AC gives his excellent programme for beginners:

Furnish your mind as completely as possible with the knowledge of how to inspect and to control it.

Train your body to obey your mind, and not to distract its attention.

Control your mind to devote itself wholly to discover your true Will.

Explore the course of that Will till you reach its source, your Silent Self.

Unite the conscious will with the true Will, and the conscious Ego with the Silent Self.

You must be utterly ruthless in discarding any atom of consciousness which is hostile or neutral.

Let this work freely from within; but heed not your environment, lest you make difference between one thing and another. Whatever it be, it is to be made one with you by love.

(2/21/01 EV)

38. He must teach; but he may make severe the ordeals.

(A Hod verse on teaching.)

That is: Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law. Teaching is what he was made to do; so he "must" do it.

How do these ordeals relate to those of which Nuit would "write not"? I do not know. I note he is not determining the nature of the ordeals, merely determining their strength or severity (Geburan nature), as if as a screening device. (4/3/95 EV)

39. The word of the Law is [Thelema].

Thus it is said. How can I comment on this when AC spent an entire lifetime doing so?

Note that this is the word of the law, its Chokmah. There is a Law behind the Word that is inexpressible; but in these 6 letters totaling 93, commencing with the letter of Leo (=9), there is an articulation of its Nature.

The historic influence of Rabelais is acknowledged; but what is expressed here is entirely new, unlike any prior articulation. The WORD is WILL; and in it are to be found wondrous formulae. (Even the name OYVZ [Aiwass] was later found to equal it as 93.)

Theta Leo

Epsilon Aquarius (not recognized in '04)

Lambda Libra

Eta Cancer

Mu Water

Alpha Air

Leo and Aquarius, Libra and Cancer, Water and Air. Courage and Knowledge, Action and Speech, Silence and Breath.

It should not be missed that this is the declaration of a new Word at the Equinox of the Gods, even as a new word is declared within the Order at each Equinox.

("Abrahadabra" is "the Word of the Aeon." Thelema is "the word of the Law." It is not quite clear which is "the Word of the Equinox," though I side with the former.) In context it seems intimately connected to the teachings that were mentioned in the foregoing verses; and, in fact, it is the central theme of those teachings. (2/18/01 EV)

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Continue to next verse. Liber L., Cap. 1, vv. 40-49

NUIT

40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49
1-9	10-19	20-30	31-39	50-59	60-66				

40. Who calls us Thelemes will do no wrong, if he look but close into the word. For there are therein Three Grades. The Hermit and the Lover and the man of Earth. Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

[PRELIMINARY NOTE: I will likely be replacing the following at some point when I have time to dig back through old diaries. I no longer think "the word" is "Thelema." I think it is

"Thelemite," which opens itself to a much more direct and fruitful analysis. Here follows the original 1994 meditation, though.]

Here "the word" is likely "Thelema." AC gave an example of "look[ing]... close into the word;" but it is far from definitive. Its three syllables form one way, certainly, of seeking to see the Three Grades.

The three vowels — especially sacred to the Greeks — are Epsilon (Aquarius), Eta (Cancer), Alpha (Air). In a sense, all are letters of pure breath, which is in any case the nature of a vowel. They total 14.

The consonants give form to the Word. They are Theta (Leo), Lambda (Libra), Meym (Water). Together, they total 79.

The three syllables, ThE-LE-MA, enumerate to 14-38-41; and this is the basis of AC's commentary and analysis. They can be drawn as 11 between [an upright and an averse pentagram, respectively].

ThE = 14 = Yod-Daleth [Yod, meaning "hand"], a homonym of YVD [Yod, the letter] — but I think not close enough! ThE does not equal Leo and Aries as AC first believed, but rather Leo and Aquarius, the Beast and Babalon, the Lion and the Eagle, Courage and Knowledge, Light and Liberty. XI + XVII = XXVIII (Power) --> X, Fortune, Jupiter, but also Kether.

LH = Libra + Cancer, VIII + VII = XV, The Devil, who is also the Sun.

MA = Water + Air (which, by themselves, are Heh + Vav = 11), seen also as XII + 0 = XII, The Hanged Man.

X + XV + XII = XXXVII, the number of letters in "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law!"

But I do not take much of the foregoing very seriously either.

What is entirely clear is that the Order has but three Grades, and they are called Hermit, Lover, and Man of Eearth. AC equated these to Master, Adept, and Zelator; that is, to the Orders commencing at Binah, Tiphereth, and Malkuth, respectively. Also, the key declaration of the Law is given. "Do what thou wilt" (Four words: Earth, Air, Water, Fire: The Four Worlds) is the whole of the Law. Four words, 14 letters. (For the third time, 14 appears!)

Liber 418 adds that, "The man of earth is the adherent. The lover giveth his life unto the work among men. The hermit goeth solitary, and giveth only of his light unto men."

I think there is an oft-missed point to this verse, often over-shadowed by its technicalities. Superficially, outsiders, hearing of our Word "Thelema," might call us

"Thelemites." Their superficial and uninformed reasons would be wrong, would misrepresent us; but in truth, there is a way of looking at the word so that it does us great justice and declares the truth of our principles and nature. Let not the superficial idea of "will" label us; let us look more closely and see the deeper level, looking not only as Men of Earth, but also as Lovers and Hermits; not only with the Nephesh, but with the Ruach and Neshamah. Let us Understand the Word, and wear it proudly.

[An upright Pentagram precedes:]

ThE = 14 = Yod-Daleth, The Hermit & The Empress, Love & Will. The highest attributions of this New Law.

LH = 38 = Lamed-Cheth, Adjustment & The Chariot, Equilibrium & Abrahadabra, fundamental attributions, accomplishments, and attainments of the Adept.

[An averse Pentagram precedes:]

MA = 41 = Meym-Aleph, The Hanged Man & The Fool, "the condition of those who are not adepts."

[Several lines of tedious gematria follow and are excluded here.]

NOTE: I:40 is decisively a Malkuth verse. (4/3/95 EV)

41. The word of Sin is Restriction. O man! refuse not thy wife if she will. O lover, if thou wilt, depart. There is no bond that can unite the divided but love: all else is a curse. Accursed! Accursed! be it to the aeons. Hell.
As AC often wrote, this verse is the counterpoint of what has gone before. "Restriction" is the antithesis of "Thelema."

"Sin," by etymology, has nothing to do with "badness." It is error — French *erreur* — and specifically (from archery) that type of error which comes from falling short of the mark. As AC wrote in Aha (I quote from memory only), "This is sin — to hold thy holy nature in." It is to constrain oneself, due to doubts, fears, and conflicting thoughts or emotions, from giving all of oneself to one's will. This, by itself, bespeaks Restriction — self-restriction primarily, but secondarily an interference with the Will of others as well.

It is in this spirit that the next two verses appear. I agree with the general view that "man" and "lover" refer to the grades from v. 40.

The man of Earth is admonished, "refuse not thy wife, if she will." This is often taken in a sexual way; I think that interpretation is far too narrow. The sexual interpretation is one important interpretation, but not the whole thing. Given social conventions of that date, inherited from thousands of years of Osirian perspective, it most broadly shows the honoring of a wife's will as equally as that of the husband. "Wife," by etymology, just means "woman" (hence the archaic phrase "man and wife" just meant "man and woman"). We can certainly shift to a symbolic language like, "O Ruach, refuse not the

will of the Nephesh," and these may be useful and meaningful — but they are clearly secondary.

But what I now see, for the first time, is a very intriguing contrast between the instructions to the Adept and the non-Adept. The Adept — the Lover — is instructed to take witness of his or her own Will, and the Non-Adept — the Man of Earth — to take witness of the Will of others. This is obviously too simple, but is nonetheless the basis of some serious instruction. The Man of Earth's lessons are of the Nephesh, of fire; and (s)he cannot adequately yet know the True Will; but the Adept's lessons are of Mind, of the Ruach, and (s)he is equipped with lucid knowledge of the inner Truth. This can surely be developed better than I have done so briefly here.

And furthermore, the Lover, if so led by Will, is to depart. But depart from what? Only the particular Adept can know that. It is unique to each. But a renunciation is (by history and experience) always warranted.

And this is because of the next line. Only love unites, for love is unity, ahebah is achad. Any contrary effort is foredoomed — and is also pure hell! The use of "curse" here also bears the marks of the ecclesiastical use of a declaration of anathema or censure — here the words of Nuit, whose nature is love, who represents all existence as this unity. Anything but love is a withdrawal from Nuit — it is not done unto Her!

AC reinforces (O.C.) that the interference with another's will is an affirmation of duality. (I knew that interfering with another's will simply should not be done; but this is the technical reason why, from the point of view of an aspirant.) We must transform 2 to 0 ($0=2$); and this transformation is primarily one of perspective, of how to view (Heh = window).

N.B. In the N.C., AC wrote some of his best stuff on sexual freedom and its spiritual necessity, some of which is given here below:

There shall be no property in human flesh. The sex-instinct is one of the most deeply-seated expressions of the will; and it must not be restricted, either negatively by preventing its free function, or positively by insisting on its false function.

What is more brutal than to stunt natural growth or to deform it?

What is more absurd than to seek to interpret this holy instinct as a gross animal act, to separate it from the spiritual enthusiasm without which it is so stupid as not even to be satisfactory to the persons concerned?

The sexual act is a sacrament of Will. To profane it is the great offence. All true expression of it is lawful; all suppression or distortion is contrary to the Law of Liberty. To use legal or financial constraint to compel either abstention or submission, is entirely horrible, unnatural and absurd. Physical constraint, up to a certain point, is not so seriously wrong; for it has its roots in the original sex-conflict which we see in ani mals,

and has often the effect of exciting Love in his highest and noblest shape. Some of the most passionate and permanent attachments have begun with rape. Rome was actually founded thereon. Similarly, murder of a faithless partner is ethically excusable, in a certain sense; for there may be some stars whose Nature is extreme violence. The collision of galaxies is a magnificent spectacle, after all. But there is nothing inspiring in a visit to one's lawyer. Of course this is merely my personal view; a star who happened to be a lawyer might see things otherwise! Yet Nature's unspeakable variety, though it admits cruelty and selfishness, offers us not example of the puritan and the prig!

However, to the mind of Law there is an Order of Going; and a machine is more beautiful, save to the Small Boy, when it works than when it smashes. Now the Machine of Matter-Motion is an explosive machine, with pyrotechnic effects; but these are only incidentals.

Laws against adultery are based upon the idea that woman is a chattel, so that to make love to a married woman is to deprive the husband of her services. It is the frankest and most crass statement of a slave-situation. To us, every woman is a star. She has therefore an absolute right to travel in her own orbit. There is no reason why she should not be the ideal hausfrau, if that chance to be her will. But society has no right to insist upon that standard. It was, for practical reasons, almost necessary to set up such taboos in small communities, savage tribes, where the wife was nothing but a general servant, where the safety of the people depended upon a high birth-rate. But to-day woman is economically independent, becomes more so every year. The result is that she instantly asserts her right to have as many or as few men or babies as she wants or can get; and she defies the world to interfere with her. More power to her — elbow!

The War has seen this emancipation flower in four years. Primitive people, the Australian troops for example, are saying that they will not marry English girls, because English girls like a dozen men a week. Well, who wants them to marry? Russia has already formally abrogated marriage. Germany and France have tried to "save their faces" in a thoroughly Chinese manner, by "marrying" pregnant spinsters to dead soldiers!

England has been too deeply hypocritical, of course, to do more than "hush things up;" and is pretending "business as usual," though every pulpit is aquake with the clamour of bat-eyed bishops, squeaking of the awful immorality of everybody but themselves and their choristers. Englishwomen over 30 have the vote; when the young'uns get it, good-bye to the old marriage system.

America has made marriage a farce by the multiplication and confusion of the Divorce Laws. A friend of mine who had divorced her husband was actually, three years later, sued by him for divorce!!!

But America never waits for laws; her people go ahead. The emancipated, self-supporting American woman already acts exactly like the "bachelor-boy." Sometimes she loses her head, and stumbles into marriage, and stubs her toe. She will

soon get tired of the folly. She will perceive how imbecile it is to hamstring herself in order to please her parents, or to legitimatize her children, or to silence her neighbours.

She will take the men she wants as simply as she buys a newspaper; and if she doesn't like the Editorials, or the Comic Supplement, it's only two cents gone, and she can get another.

Blind asses! who pretend that women are naturally chaste! The Easterns know better; all the restrictions of the harem, of public opinion, and so on, are based upon the recognition of the fact that woman is only chaste when there is nobody around. She will snatch the babe from its cradle, or drag the dog from its kennel, to prove the old saying: *Natura abhorret a vacuo*. For she is the Image of the Soul of Nature, the Great Mother, the Great Whore.

It is to be well noted that the Great Women of History have exercised unbounded freedom in Love. Sappho, Semiramis, Messalina, Cleopatra, Ta Chhi, Pasiphae, Clytaemnaestra, Helen of Troy, and in more recent times Joan of Arc (by Shakespeare's account), Catherine II of Russia, Queen Elizabeth of England, George Sand. Against these we can put only Emily Brontë, whose sex-suppression was due to her environment, and so burst out in the incredible violence of her art, and the regular religious mystics, Saint Catherine, Saint Teresa, and so on, the facts of whose sex-life have been carefully camouflaged in the interests of the slave-gods. But, even on that showing, the sex-life was intense, for the writings of such women are overloaded with sexual expression passionate and perverted, even to morbidity and to actual hallucination.

Sex is the main expression of the Nature of a person; great Natures are sexually strong; and the health of any person will depend upon the freedom of that function. [Emphasis added.]

(4/3/95 EV)

42. Let it be that state of manyhood bound and loathing. So with thy all thou hast no right but to do thy will
(A Chokmah verse, continuing the thread on Will.)

The clearest portion is the conclusion. Not only are we to do our will — we are to do nothing else! And we are to do it "with our all." It must be the whole of our life.

The first sentence, then, seems to refer to the "accurséd" state that is not unto Nuit. I do not know exactly what a "state of manyhood" is, but it is obviously not an experience of Unity. It is the state of complex duality ("manyhood") that is the cause of sorrow, of suffering. It is "bound" because it is a "bond" without real love. It is thus loathing.

A relationship without love is a good example of this. It is hell. It is filled with loathing. It

is imprisoning. Such an experience is surely, in itself, to motivate us to the alternative, which is, with our all, to do naught but our will.

As AC wrote, "The idea of self-sacrifice is a moral cancer..." His commentary here is a nice discussion of conditions when one finds oneself in conflict. (2/18/01 EV)

43. Do that and no other shall say nay.

Continues the ongoing thread. Self-evident. The universe will impede one who acts contrary to his or her will; but, we are told, there is no resistance when one does only one's will, and does it with one's all.

(It is a Binah verse, addressing the issue of resistance to one's actions by the Universe.) (2/18/01 EV)

44. For pure will, unassuaged of purpose, delivered from the lust of result, is every way perfect

"Pure will." I am reminded that Yesod is the Purifying Consciousness. The will that is here discussed is (from the verse content) obviously clear, undistorted, &c.; and by this word "pure" we are likely told that it is especially undistorted by the instincts, emotions, and reactions. Quite the contrary; the adaptive aspect of the psyche, and the inherent force of the will in subconsciousness, likely ensure its pure manifestation. (The word "pure" is THVR = 220, the number of verses in the Book.)

This will is to be "unassuaged of purpose." AC had difficulty with this language.

"Unassuaged" can perhaps best be rendered as "undiminished." The inherent passion or drive of the will is not to be diminished. Thirdly, it must be without "lust of result," for all of the usual reasons. Pure. Undiminished in its purposefulness. Yet without lust of result. Such will is perfect will. (AC renders "without lust of result" as "nonattachment," which is good.)

AC defines "pure will" as "the true expression of the Nature, the proper or inherent motion of the matter, concerned. It is unnatural to aim at any goal."

(PRELIMINARY NOTE. The expected Chesed attribution of this verse is broadly present — especially in comparison to the verse preceding — by the sure forth flowing of the "perfect" will. On first impression, I suspect the four parts of this verse correspond to the Sephiroth 1-4: "pure will" = Kether, "unassuaged of purpose" = Chokmah, "delivered from the lust of result" = Binah, climaxing in "is every way perfect" = Chesed. It's pretty good. But I want to spend more time delving into it.) (2/18/01 EV)

45. The Perfect and the Perfect are one Perfect and not two; nay, are none!

I have long intuitively understood this verse; but something in me, some resistance, is very loath to give voice to its meaning. I do not yet understand this resistance. Part of it

is that I am afraid of giving a partial and incomplete perspective. Yes, that is much of it. The part of me which understands this is perceptive of "the Perfect," and feels it would be lying, or somehow hurtful, to give too precise a voice to this verse.

But I must try.

It is very much like saying that any number of Zeroes added together persist in totaling Zero; and this is a positive consequence of their Zero-ness, their Perfection, their having resolved their interior (seeming) inconsistencies. Even "one Perfect" is 1×0 , or 0.

It has always had the sense, to me, of a wedding — two perfections added, as though two exalted lovers mating. In such a scenario, this verse provides a clear meaning. Vertically, it also signifies the wedding of the perfection of "pure will" &c.; (as in the previous verse) with Nuit. Their identity is a Unity which dissolves into Silence, which is the real characteristic of each Perfection in the first place. (I am still dissatisfied with this explanation.)

How does AC treat this verse? He begins by admitting it difficult, then fails to go any further. It is a bridge into a subsequent discussion of "Nothing." He seems to suspect a Qabalistic veiled mystery. I, on the other hand, think it is plain as day, but cannot bring myself to drag it down the planes and put it in language; which should lead one to question my understanding after all.

To go off into a totally different direction: to Hod is attributed the "Perfect Consciousness." The Hebrew for "perfect" is here ShLM, Shalem — essentially the same word as Shalom. "The Perfect" is thus a state of peace. It is the balanced wedding of opposites, as of Fire and Water (ShLM = Fire-Libra-Water). It is wholeness, a literal meaning of the same word. All of these ideas fit our present verse very well. The Perfect Consciousness is "the Plan of the Primordial" (tekunath ha-qadmuht). Its essence emanates from "the hidden chambers of Gedulah."

GEMATRIA: ShLM = 370. This may tell us something about "the Perfect" which we here study. First, it is OSh; and the whole of Liber A'ash is a kind of commentary on the proper state. Also, 370 is the Greek OLOS, meaning "perfect." The Greek and Hebrew words for "perfect" have exactly the same numerical value! The secret is in this ShLM, and in OSh.

At the risk of "pushing it," we already have a literal rendering of the verse as, "Shalem and holos are one Number [370] and not two." How does this literally, then, also confirm, "nay, are none"? 370 is 37×10 , the Perfection, Unity, and Silence of Yechidah expressed through the ten Sephiroth, the Plan of Wholeness or Perfection; even as ALPh = 111, or 3×37 . (Related? Not so far...)

GEMATRIA: Pure Will = THVR RTzVN? = 566. 566 is SVD spelled in full, hiding the Great Secret; but it goes no further.

In the last analysis, there is not "this Perfection" and "that Perfection" but, rather, Perfection wherein all do their will purely, freely, without attachment, and with undiminished purpose. (4/3/95 EV)

46. Nothing is a secret key of this law[.] Sixty-one the Jews call it; I call it eight, eighty, four hundred & eighteen.

47. But they have the half: unite by thine art so that all disappear.

48. My prophet is a fool with his one one one: are not they the Ox and none by the Book.[?]

NOTE to MYSELF: Punctuation has been conformed to the original — does this change the meaning?

These three verses compose one of the great Qabalistic puzzles of the Book. Such puzzles are subject to more than one solution; and the present one has at least one significant solution besides that on the surface.

But, before getting into that, we should endeavor to read the plain language meaning.

"Nothing is a secret key of this law." The idea of Naught, or Zero, is an important Qabalistic concept to this Book. Due to the introduction of $0=2$, the idea of "Unity" no longer means One as it has been previously understood. Indeed, One, as usually understood, does not exist. There is, in fact, Nothing like that. Two dissolves into Zero. One is an egocentric limitation. To understand "Do what thou wilt" and the word Thelema, we must understand Zero.

The Nothing is known in Qabalah as AYN = 61. By permutation of the letters we get ANY, "I, myself." This confirms that this Nothing is the real sense of self, of the ego. Nuit introduces other numerical clues which will be explored.

Verse 47 poses the puzzle which we shall explore. The word "they" is obscure, and its right understanding is the key to the solution. It does not refer to "the Jews."

Crowley is then said to be "a fool with his one, one, one," etc. The Qabalistic meanings of this verse seem so clear that they utterly blind us to the real meaning. On the surface, we note that, in the Tarot, Aleph is The Fool; its value in full is 111 (ALPh); it means "Ox;" and its value in Tarot (i.e., by the "Book of Thoth") is 0 ("none"). Just the kind of thing to spill off of a Qabalist's mind, and certainly it serves to give us The Fool as an enigma whose "solution" is only in the Way of Going. But, first of all, it is not the deepest solution to this numerical puzzle; and, secondly, it obscures the "plain English" meaning.

Thus, AC is told that he is "a fool with his one, one, one." The English construction is the same as if we had said, "All you ever do is eat, eat, eat!" He was obsessed with One, with Unity; and he is being told that the Answer is not to be found there. The Answer is in Naught. (Read AC's Essay on Number in Eqx. I:5, written some years

earlier; therein he is initially looking for a path to Unity as a solution to Duality. It comes up over and over.) The simple meaning is, then, "Nothing is a secret key of this law... You're an idiot to be obsessed with the idea of One."

We now turn to a Qabalistic numerical solution. Although the final solution is very simple, let us take some time to review the individual components a little more thoroughly.

61 has already been explained. There is, of course, much more to be gotten there. In particular, ANY, "I," also means "a fleet of ships." In meditation, that produces a remarkable understanding of the phenomenon, or rather the loosely associated phenomena, which we each call "I."

8, 80, & 418 are numerically linked, since 80 reduces to 8, and 8, Cheth, is 418 in plenitude.

Since this text was verbally dictated to AC — and thus are we given liberty with the "stops" and "space marks" — this could be "880 & 418." 880 = Harpocrates ([Greek] ARPOKRATHS). 418 = Ra-Hoor ([Hebrew] RA-HVVR). This, though intriguing, is however a digression from the main meaning.

8 is the "Dominical Number," a number classically related to Christ-Hermes as Redeemer. Dozens — maybe hundreds! — of pages, could be written about this one Solar-Serpentine-Redeemer number, the foundation of the entire Ogdoadic (i.e. Hermetic) tradition. By itself it reflects "Nothing" in the form of Infinity; for 8, or [infinity symbol], is an early form of Omega. In fact, in our Arabic numerals, only two are truly infinite, meaning they can be traced infinitely without skip or reversal. These are 8 and 0. I shall explore this more deeply in Cap. II. For now I note only that 8, 80, & 418 (which is another way of writing 8) are all composed exclusively of these numerals.

80 is primarily Peh and YSVD, Yesod. Interestingly, in Greek it is DFO, "two," even as in Latin it is geminus, "twin." There is extensive doctrine interrelating Cheth and Peh.

418 is a fundamental key of this entire Book. There is no need to repeat my very large notebook page here. The word Abrahadabra ultimately means "superconsciousness" or "completion of the Work," especially through the 5=6 formula. (It is the 5=6 formula.)

Let us now return to the verses 46-48.

$8 + 80 + 418 = 506$, the value of ShVR, the actual Hebrew word for "ox," and the name of the constellation Taurus. This is the deeper meaning, being both more literal and more blinded. The significance of the number 506 (especially as 50 & 6 or NV) should not pass without witness.

$8 + 80 + 418 + 61 = 567$. By itself, 567 has no special relevance to our puzzle, for it is not a complete truth. The "they" in vv. 47-48 refers to the 61, 8, 80, & 418 of v. 46. The

numbers themselves are the only reasonable antecedents.

If 567 is the half, then the other half is also 567. The whole is thus $567 \times 2 = 1,134$, which is:

AYN SVPh AVR

(Ayin Soph Or)

the Limitless Light, the Qabalistic Zero, wherein "all disappear."

(Ain Soph Or by its primary enumeration is $414 = \text{Azoth}$, and part of that Mystery of "one in eight" which will be encountered in Cap. II.)

Having the solution, we proceed to v. 48 and are told, as above discussed, that the prophet is "a fool" in his obsession with Unity; for "they" (the numbers added previously) are 506, ShVR, "the Ox," and 61, "none" — all "by the Book"!

There are, of course, multiple variant meanings; but I believe this is the main one. Even in the word ShVR is the true Hierophant found in the midst of the Fire and the Sun; and the word itself, being literally Taurus, is Vav and The Hierophant.

Verse 48 also veils an important theoretical and practical secret to which every T.'O.'.T.'. initiate is introduced, but probably none below 5° is ready to appreciate; and the final key is not given until the 7°.

Furthermore, 111 can be studied by itself, and should be. It is a number of the Sun, of Creative Light; and this Light exists both in thick darkness and in blinding splendor, both by night and by day. Here is that "Lord of the Light and of the Darkness."

The Book of the Law has, therefore, steered us toward the idea of Nothing, and away from "one." It has given us a puzzle to solve, and left a few keys along the way. It has hinted at an entirely new Qabalah. (4/3/95 EV)

49. Abrogate are all rituals, all ordeals, all words and signs. Ra-Hoor-Khuit hath taken his seat in the East at the Equinox of the Gods and let Asar be with Isa who also are one. But they are not of me[.] Let Asar be the adorant, Isa the Sufferer; Hoor in his secret name and splendour is the Lord initiating.

[Note 7/5/95 E.V. I have changed "sufferer" to "Sufferer," in accordance with the original ms. There are other punctuation changes that I have today made, for similar conformation. This verse should be meditated upon anew to see if this seems to change anything.]

This verse is the critical one defining and authorizing the new Order. (I am intrigued that it is verse 49 per se, and also that it is one of the Yesod verses.) Here the highest spiritual authority AC had ever contacted made some formal declarations of the greatest practical import.

First, the details of the old Order are swept away. Its rituals and ordeals, its words and signs were abrogated. (Incidentally, this includes also the Word of the prior Equinox of the Gods, the essential formula of the Osiris Aeon per se.) This does not mean they can no longer be used, only that they would need to be promulgated anew if they were to be used. It is a banishing. We begin with a clean slate.

Next, the new Hierophant is appointed and declared. Osiris' term of office is expired. Horus, the Hieres of the last Aeon, who governed the outer on Osiris' behalf, is now advanced to the throne of the East as a symbol of light and strength, of wisdom and of peace. In the same fashion that the Dying God archetype was the "revealer of the mysteries" for the few thousand years past, this Hawk-headed Lord shall now serve in the new time. Osiris, the Cross (=4), has been succeeded by Horus, the Pentagram (=5); and especially that Solar-Martial form known as Ra-Hoor, who combines within Himself the formulæ of the 5 and the 6, truly representing the perfection of the Great Work in Tiphereth. Horus is the new "Christ" — i.e., we are told in Cap. III that He is the "visible object of worship," the image toward which all (and especially the profane) may most effectively turn. He is the inner guru, the interior teacher, the generic "stand-in" for one's own Holy Guardian Angel. (Horus — Koor — is that same "C.R." as Christ, and, in fact, a more primal form.)

"Asar" is Osiris. "Isa" is Jesus (not Isis, as I wrongly believed for years). With Horus now as Hierophant, we are told to lump Osiris and Jesus together, for they "also are one." We are also told that they "are not of me," i.e., not of Nuit (MH, "me," means "not" or Nuit; its numeration is 48, as is that of the Hebrew KVKB, "star."). I am certain this is to be taken in some limited sense, since they (especially as solar deities) are stars in the body of Our Lady of the Stars — are they not? The simple interpretation of "they are not of me" is that they have nothing to do with the new dispensation — as officers they are "off the floor," so to speak. (I resist the reversal of meaning that arises if "not" and "me" are interpreted differently.)

Osiris is "the adorant," which likely means an adorant of the goddess as Isis &c.; Jesus is "the sufferer," which is self-evident. Hoor is "the Lord initiating."

This is the second time Ra-Hoor-Khuit (with slightly different orthography) has been mentioned in this Book. The prior time was in v. 36. Based on a comparison of that verse to this one, we can further confirm that AC's commentary on Liber L. was to be written by the Wisdom of the Revealer of the Mysteries, of the Lord initiating — again, his HGA is clearly intended.

I note that AC, in the O.C., identified Asar-Isa as now being the Candidate, not the Hierophant. This we discovered ourselves, and I find it to be true. I am happy to add the authority of his opinion on this.

About three weeks before the dictation of this Book, AC had performed the Invocation of Horus which apparently "kicked off" the Equinox of the Gods. He mentioned therein a

"secret name" of Horus which is surely connected to this reference shortly thereafter. The name was Hoori.

GEMATRIA: I suspect HVVRY = 227. This number is related to the sexual energies: 227 = ZKR, "male member," the sacred [Phi]. It is also [Greek] astron, "star."

(7/5/95 EV)

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Continue to next verse. Liber L., Cap. 1, vv. 50-59

NUIT

50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59
1-9	10-19	20-30	31-39	40-49	60-66				

50. There is a word to say about the Hierophantic task. Behold! there are three ordeals in one, and it may be given in three ways. The gross must pass through fire; let the fine be tried in intellect, and the lofty chosen ones in the highest. Thus ye have star & star[,] system & system[;] let not one know well the other.

The final verse in the series describing and defining the Order. (I have been unable to discern whether these last ten verses reflect more clearly Heh or Tzaddi.)

These three levels of Ordeals are often given concurrently, often in the same situation. That is, one is tested in Nephesh, Ruach, and Neshamah. They are by no means sequential; but, according to one's level of spiritual maturity, one will (on different occasions) be more or less aware of one level or another.

My brother, the T.H., T.I., & T.I. Fra. Hymenaeus Beta, who is also Frater Superior of O.T.O., once expressed to me the view that these "three ways" refer to the three Grades of H., L., and M.E. Within the identically named "Triads" in O.T.O., it is a good theoretical fit, and may even have been intentional on AC's part. Thus, the Man of Earth (0°-P.'I.I.') works through a kundalini or chakra symbolism, and in other ways is passed "through fire." The Lovers (V°- VII°) should be "tried in intellect." The Hermit (VIII°-X°) should respond to... something higher. It is a good theory, and probably should be tried by them.

In real life — which is never so formal — I reassert that these ordeals are more typically concurrent and overlapping.

And underneath it all is the important and necessary understand that, where ordeals are concerned, there is no common rule for all. Each is unique in its own way. Each star — each being — ultimately has its own "system" (no matter how similar the outer plan or form looks). And, "let not one know well the other!" This is the basic formula of the Probationert of A.'A.'..

Having discussed the form of the Order in vv. 31-50, a new phase is introduced with v. 51. By theory, vv. 51-60 should correspond symbolically either to Peh or to Vav. These verses begin by explaining the essential inner disciplines of the new system, and something of the results. The details of the worship of Nuit begin to be given, and are completed in the decade following. (4/5/95 EV)

51. There are four gates to one palace; the floor of that palace is of silver and gold, lapis lazuli & jasper are there, and all rare scents jasmine & rose, and the emblems of death. Let him enter in turn or at once the four gates; let him stand on the floor of the palace. Will he not sink? Amn. Ho! warrior, if thy servant sink? But there are means and means. Be goodly therefore: dress ye all in fine apparel eat rich foods and drink sweet wines and wines that foam. Also, take your fill and will of love as ye will, when, where and with whom ye will. But always unto me.

(Kether verse of the Vav section, marked by Amn.)

This extraordinary verse is subject to much potential interpretation. I have long felt sure that I know what it means. It describes a temple of Tiphereth, of the Sun, the Inner Sanctum of each and all. The “four gates” are the solar quarters — the “gates” of Liber Resh or (in the alternative) as in the Portal Ritual. (These two views are synthesized in the Opening of Liber CXX.)

Here is the wedding of the Sun and Moon in the sacrament of Samekh. The floor is of silver and gold. Jasmine and rose correspond to Yesod and Tiphereth. The “emblems of death” are also those of the Rosy Cross (and, I suppose, also the emblems of The Devil and Death, Atus XV and XIII). Each initiate enters these four gates “in turn or at once.”

“Amn” is, of course, AMN = 91; but it veils a secret Tetragrammaton (these “four gates”) because, with Nun-final, it enumerates to 741 = A M Sh Th, the letters attributed to the Four Elements.

The aspirant, in attaining to this palace, is to “stand,” and is apparently admonished not to “sink” (as on bent knee or in prostration). Then again, the remainder may be saying that, after all, there are many valid approaches.

Who is the “warrior”? The “warrior lord” was mentioned in v. 5, and there I believed it to refer to Horus. Although there has been prior mention of the servants of Nuit, here we first encounter reference to what is likely the servant of Horus. Why is this phrase here? Is it a mock, a query, or what?

GEMATRIA: AMN is 91 or 741, Kether and/or the Four Elements (A, M, Sh, Th). “Ho” may be HV, 11.

But we are then advised, for the first time, of the ways of worshiping Nuit. We are to take pleasure in every way, including in love (so long as it conforms to will), “But always

unto me.” (4/5/95 EV; amended slightly 11/13/03 EV)

52. If this be not aright; if ye confound the space-marks, saying: They are one or saying They are many; if the ritual be not ever unto me: then expect the direful judgments of Ra Hoor Khuit.

The general sense is completely clear, even if the details are not.

The last verse concluded that every love and every other pleasure is permitted and encouraged if it be but unto Nuit, an act holy and devoted. The present verse discusses the consequences if this is not so. These are self-inflicting penalties, the purest karma, and are labeled as the “direful judgments” of R.H.K.

I have no idea what “space-marks” are. They appear to refer to perceptions of duality. The essential thing is that “the ritual” — any act soever — be ever unto Nuit.

AC goes on for many pages in his N.C. Among the most interesting of his remarks: He summarizes a “general rule” whereby love may be celebrated “in full conformity with the principles here enunciated.”

He will choose the object of his passion at the nod of his Silent Self. He will not allow the prejudice, either of sense, emotion, or rational judgement, to obscure the Sun of his Soul. In the first place, mutual magnetism, despite the masks of mind, should be unmistakable. Unless it exists, a puissant purity of passion, there is no Magical basis for the Sacrament. Yet, such magnetism is only the first condition. Where two people become intimate, each crisis of satisfaction between the terminals leaves them in a proximity which demands mutual observation; and the intense clarity of the mind which results from the discharge of the electric force makes such observation abnormally critical. The higher the type of mind, the more certain this is, and the greater the danger of finding some antipathetic trifle which experience tells us will one day be the only thing left to observe; just as a wart on the nose is remembered when the rest of the face is forgotten.

The object of Love must therefore be one with the lover in something more than the Will to unite magnetically; it must be in passionate partnership with the Will of which the Will-to-love is only the Magical symbol. Perhaps no two wills can be identical, but at least they can be so sympathetic that the manifestations are not likely to clash. It is not enough to have a partner of the passive type who bleats “Thy will is done” — that ends in contempt, boredom, and distrust. One wants a passion that can blend with one's own. Where this is the case, it does not matter so much whether the mental expression is syndromic; it is, indeed, better when two entirely different worlds of thought and experience have led to sister conclusions. But it is essential that the habit of mind should be sympathetic, that the machinery should be constructed on similar principles. The psychology of the one should be intelligible to the other.

Social position and physical appearance and habits are of far less importance,

especially in a society which has accepted the Law of Thelema. Tolerance itself produces suavity, and suavity soon relieves the strain on tolerance. In any case, most people, especially women, adapt themselves adroitly enough to their environment. I say "Especially women," for women are nearly always conscious of an important part of their true Will: the bearing of children. To them, nothing else is serious in comparison, and they dismiss questions which do not bear on this as trifles, adopting the habits required of them in the interest of the domestic harmony which they recognize as a condition favourable to reproduction.

I have outlined ideal conditions. Rarely indeed can we realize even a third of our possibilities. Our Magical engine is mighty indeed when its efficiency reaches 50% of its theoretical horse-power. But the enormous majority of mankind have no idea whatever of taking Love as a sacred and serious thing, of using the eye of the microscopist, or the heart and brain of the artist. Their ignorance and their shame have made Love a carcass of pestilence; and Love has avenged the outrage by crushing their lives when they pull down the temple upon them.

The chance of finding a suitable object of Love has been reduced well nigh to zero by substituting for the actual conditions, as stated in the above paragraphs, a totally artificial and irrelevant series; the restrictions on the act itself, marriage, opinion, the conspiracy of silence, criminal laws, financial fetters, selections limited by questions of race, nationality, caste, religion, social and political cliqueishness, even family exclusiveness. Out of the millions of humanity the average person is lucky if he can take his pick of a couple of score of partners.

...we of Thelema, like the artist, the true lover of Love, shameless and fearless, seeing God face to face alike in our own souls within and in all Nature without, though we use, as the bourgeois does, the word Love, we hold not the word "too often profaned for us to profane it;" it burns inviolate in its sanctuary, being reborn immaculate with every breath of life. But by "Love" we mean a thing which the eye of the bourgeois hath not seen, nor his ear heard; neither hath his heart conceived it. We have accepted Love as the meaning of Change, Change being the Life of all Matter soever in the Universe. And we have accepted Love as the mode of Motion of the Will to Change. To us every act, as implying Change, is an act of Love. Life is a dance of delight, its rhythm an infinite rapture that never can weary or stale. Our personal pleasure in it is derived not only from our own part in it, but from our conscious apprehension of its total perfections. We study its structure, we expand ourselves as we lose ourselves in understanding it, and so becoming one with it. With the Egyptian initiate we exclaim and add the antistrophe: "There is no part of the Gods that is not also of us."

Therefore, the Love that is Law is not less Love in the petty personal sense; for Love that makes two One is the engine whereby even the final Two, Self and Not-Self, may become One, in the mystic marriage of the Bride, the Soul, with Him appointed from eternity to espouse her; yea, even the Most High, God All-in-All, the Truth.

(4/5/95 EV; amended slightly 11/13/03 EV)

53. This shall regenerate the world, the little world my sister, my heart & my tongue, unto whom I send this kiss. Also, o scribe and prophet though thou be of the princes it shall not assuage thee nor absolve thee. But ecstasy be thine and joy of earth: ever To me To me.

This attitude — this sanctification of enjoyment — is said to be the regeneration of the world; and, indeed, it may eventually do this. But the magnitude of the social changes necessary seem overwhelming. The gain is centuries away. In the meantime, the best we can do is for each person individually to make this commitment.

And, on inspection, we find that this may have been the intent all along. The words “little world” are literal for microcosm. It is not (it would seem) this planet, but each microcosm that Nuit references as Her “sister.” Whether the physical body is meant, or the PsYXH [psyche], it is the microcosm’s regeneration which is here intended and described.

If this is true, then the foregoing verses on the sanctification of pleasure — an enhancement of the basic practice of mindfulness — is the technical regenerative method of the Great Work.

This microcosm — if we here interpret correctly — is then referred to as “my heart & my tongue.” In verse 6, each of us was admonished to “be... Hadit, my secret centre, my heart & my tongue,” so we are on the right track.

GEMATRIA: The microcosm is referred to as “my heart & my tongue.” In Latin, “heart” + “tongue” = cor + lingua = 90. “heart & tongue” = cor et lingua = 113. In Hebrew, “my heart & my tongue” would be LBY VLSHVNY = 444.

113 is interesting for other “et-pairs,” including Deus et homo, “God and (hu)man(ity);” and lux et amor, “light and love.” Its Hebrew correspondences include ABN BChN, ehben bokhan, “a tried stone.”

If 90 is selected, it immediately hints at all of the symbolism of Tzaddi and The Emperor. In Latin it further provides (in addition to Deus + Homo and Lux + Amor) phrases including cor lucis, “heart of light” (which, as a 1=10, I picked as my probable 5=6 motto for an important paper; it didn’t turn out to be the motto, though!); gloria arcana, “a secret glory;” Liber Legis, “The Book of the Law;” pax ardens, “passionate peace;” Perdurabo (AC’s First Order motto); Priapus; and more.

444 is interesting as RA-HVVR-KhV, the English word prophet (PROPhHT), a word meaning the “sanctuary” of the temple, &c.; and in Greek, ’OIDIPOS, Oedipus.

GEMATRIA: The Latin word microcosmus (“little world”) = 132. In Latin, this is the value of words meaning “solar gold,” “with fire and sword,” and Sagittarius. It is, in Hebrew, QBL, the root of “Qabalah” and literally meaning “to receive, accept, take” — which is quite apropos here. Also ChSIDIM, Khasidim, “godly men,” i.e., Adepts.

The doctrine taught especially in these verses 51-52 is that of Nuit's kiss — a kiss blown to a young sister, a token of deep affection.

Then, as if to overcome his ego resistances, AC is told he is not exempt from this blessing. (Nor is any of us, even if we become Her "prophet;" but the world "scribe" seems to single out AC. Or does it? Is "scribe" perhaps a symbol of the Ruach here — in the bigger sense — in which case this instruction from Neshamah takes on an additional meaning?)

Again, the emphasis on "to Nuit!" But now the words used are "To me!" As AC recognized from the beginning — probably a detail already in his mind when this was written — "To Me" is cognate to the Greek TO MH, "the Not" = 418. Ecstasy and the "joy of earth" are ours — but ever within the ecstasy of relationship to Neshamah or superconsciousness.

GEMATRIA: AC interprets "this kiss" as the entire Book. Is there a clue in the word? ThYS KYSS = 470 + 150 = 620 = Chokmah Binah ve-Da'ath (ChKMH BYNH VDOTh), the first descending triad; and Kether (KThR), their Crown. Is this, the Supernal Light, not the kiss that Nuit sends unto the microcosm?

Astonishingly, AC's interpretation of the second sentence is exactly the opposite of mine: he thought it excluded him from the reward. (What was it I wrote above concerning his "ego resistance?")

[N.B. I have decided that Vav-Taurus describes these verses much better than Peh-Mars.] (4/3/95 EV)

54. Change not as much as the style of a letter; for behold thou o prophet shalt not behold all these mysteries hidden therein.

[Note to myself: Does the original punctuation change the meaning?]

Has the subject changed? Or is there a bridging concept not immediately apparent? The instruction, on the surface, is eminently practical: Do not change anything, even the style of a letter. Leave it as it is for others to explore as well.

At one level, it seems to say that there are concrete things written here that AC would not understand, and that others would. (Is his commentary on the prior verse an example of this?) At the same time, the Book is like good poetry, is in fact a prose-poem; and the value of real poetry is the value it has for each reader, more or less independent of the poet's intent.

But "these mysteries" seems to refer to something already under discussion, something precedent to the present verse; presumably the teachings of the prior verses. (7/6/95 EV)

55. The child of thy bowels, he shall behold them.

Such a tempting promise for AC. So tremendously seductive and attractive. Yet never simple or clear.

What first was believed to be a literal statement on the physical plane came later to be understood by him to refer to a “magical son,” Frater Achad. Even this, I believe, is not so simple. The verse in Cap. II may more directly refer to Achad. But here is a deeper meaning and, I believe, one for all of the rest of us as well.

The phrase is very Biblical in style and usage. At the very least, it means that one (or more) of a later generation shall first witness some of the mysteries of this Book.

“child” is a powerful symbol; and “child of thy bowels” may mean anything from physical progeny to the inner redemptive consciousness born from the alchemical processes of the intestines, to one who arises, like the stone rejected by the builders, from one’s literal or metaphysical feces.

“He” is very specific, though — even underlined in the original. This either signifies a male successor for this prophecy, or (much more likely) refers to the Qabalistic “child” as Vav (rather than Heh). It could as well be an Edwardian wish phantasm for AC, though this would be pretty atypical of this Book.)

The chief psychological impact, as I wrote above, is to state that one or more of a later generation will be instrumental in the understanding of the mysteries of this Book. I believe it refers to all (or at least many) of us who dig through it. Note that AC in the N.C. stated that “there is more than one ‘child.’”

[Interestingly, this is verse 55. It may, therefore, have a specific relationship to Malkuth and to Heh-final.]

Many passages of Liber Legis cannot be understood correctly without considering that the King James translation of The Bible was the almost exclusive reading material of Aleister Crowley in his formative years. For example, Cap. II, v. 57 is a close paraphrase of Rev. 22:11. The contents of AC’s psyche cannot help but have been strongly imprinted with the language, passion, and allusions of the Old and New Testaments.

Accordingly, in this present verse, the phrase “child of thy bowels” had a strong Biblical ring to it. Having searched, I believe it was inspired by 2 Samuel 7:12: “And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.”

In the context of 2 Sam VII, this is a message sent to David from YHWH instructing him regarding the necessity of a new temple — what will become known as Solomon’s

temple. YHVH, in the present verse, makes a pledge not for David or his own generation, but for the generation to follow. And, although the next generation seems intended on the surface, in traditional Jewish thought there would not have been a great deal of difference between such a promise for the next generation, or for any or all generations that followed.

In any case, this is the type of thought and context that would have influenced Crowley's subconscious mind in formulating the wording of the present verse. Although the phrase "child of thy bowels" does not exactly appear anywhere in The Bible, there are many examples of similar usages. A good example of the opposite point of view — a curse on a following generation — is given in Isaiah 48:19. (4/3/95 EV; small tweaks 11/13/03 EV)

56. Expect him not from the East nor from the West for from no expected house cometh that child. Aum! All words are sacred and all prophets true; save only that they understand a little; solve the first half of the equation, leave the second unattacked. But thou hast all in the clear light, and some though not all in the dark.

[This is v. 56, theoretically of immense importance in the mysteries of Nuit. Furthermore, it is part of the Tiphereth set, a fact reflected by several items in the verse itself.]

There is much packed into this verse. It continues, and seems to conclude, the matter of vv. 54-55. It seems to discuss several topics.

There is further mysterious discussion of the "child" first mentioned in v. 55. One psychological significance of the first sentence is that AC should simply not try to expect where he would find the child. It was not within his rational capacity (or even, apparently, his intuitive capacity). It is almost given as a definition that this child shall not come from anyplace he is expected. Real intuition is like this, as are some other psychic processes or contents. This sentence remains ultimately obscure to me, but seems to take the idea of the child entirely out of the framework of a physical child and, nearly, out of the framework of a physically distinctive person.

The child comes from no expected house — beth may also be used to show a genetic line of descent, as in "the House of David" — for it comes from humanity as a whole. I suspect this verse was put here in part to keenly discriminate this prophecy from that of the Jewish Messiah who was to come from an "expected house."

"He" also comes from neither East nor West because "he" comes from both — again, from all humanity. The Book is a gift to succeeding generations, a legacy of wisdom, power, and love.

"He" comes neither from sunrise nor sunset, neither from birth nor from death; for "he" is both inwardly and outwardly the eternally living One which neither rises nor sets. Within, the "child" is the Tipheric consciousness of the scribe; without, it is the ever-living continuity of humanity.

This interpretation is confirmed by the word Aum! — and this seal discloses a deeper and also more specific interpretation which I may not clearly write here.

Suddenly, by this interpretation, the entire verse becomes lucid and integrated. “All words are sacred and all prophets true” is a broad and important comment (“All religions have some truth,” as AC commented), which also specifically refers to the “words” that are to come, over the generations, from each and all Thelemites — “save only that they understand a little.” AC is then told to do what he can and leave the rest alone; to solve what he can, and leave the remainder “unattacked.” It seems that more than rituals shall be “half known and half concealed.”

But, he is told (or on a different level are we all eventually told?) that he has “all in the clear light, and some, though not all, in the dark.” I think “light” and “dark,” in this instance, refer to conscious (Ruach) vs. unconscious (Nephesh and Neshamah taken together) aspects of mind.

Later. I now see that AC agreed with my last view: “We possess all intellectual truth, and some, not all, mystic truth.” He also interpreted that, “The ‘equation’ is the representation of Truth by Word,” which I think is an excellent description of what I was “talking around.” (4/3/95 EV)

57. Invoke me under my stars. Love is the law, love under will. Nor let the fools mistake love; for there are love and love. There is the dove and there is the serpent. Choose ye well! He, my prophet, hath chosen, knowing the law of the fortress and the great mystery of the House of God

All these old letters of my Book are aright; but [Tzaddi] is not the Star. This also is secret: my prophet shall reveal it to the wise.

[A very clear example of a Netzach verse. Nearly the entire verse speaks of love.]

“Invoke me under my stars!” Probably to be taken literally. It resembles v. 12, “Come forth, o children, under the stars, and take your fill of love!” When working with verse 12, I gave several alternative meanings; but I am inclined to take this one very simply. Nuit is best invoked outside, at night, under a beautiful sky of stars.

“Love is the law, love under will.” One of the most important phrases in the entire Book, from which the technical recognition of ThELHMA = 93 = AGAPH emerged. “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law,” and yet, also, “Love is the law,” so long as it is “love under will.” 7 words. 25 letters. Thelema and Agape form a basic polarity of our system, the Yod and Heh of our Mysteries — surely, at one level, related to Chokmah and Binah respectively. Thelema distinguishes each from the other; Agape unites all collectively. Nor are they at all dissimilar, since the most fundamental expression of the Will-nature in human personality is the love-urge and its propelling vehicle of creation, the sexual force. In its oldest meaning, thelema means “what one desires,” whereas

agape is the conclusion and consummation of that desire.

(Some other time I need to examine the difference between agape, eros, philos, k.t.l.)

Yet to be true — true love? — these acts of love must be “under will,” which I take to mean that they must conform to True Will. There must be genuine and deep desire in order to complete this alchemy.

The verse then goes on to admonish care in perceiving love. (N.B. I have yet to find a place in this Book where I really believe the word “fool” has an Aleph meaning. The clearest reading is always given, so far, by the more common meaning.) Discrimination is warranted, “for there are love and love. There is the dove and there is the serpent. Choose ye well!” Compare this to Hadit’s statement in II:26 where He expresses the difference between “lifting up” and “drooping down” his head — union with the earth, or union with Nuit. In the present verse, based on classic symbols, we can understand the dove and the serpent as referring to these two options. However, there is at least some room for debate about which route is the dove, and which is the serpent. The rule is simple: The dove descends; the serpent rises. This leaves room for confusion only between when we are receiving love, and when we are expressing it.

The dove is primarily (not exclusively) related to Venus, and the serpent to Mars. This gave me the original view that the mystically pure love was the dove, and the sexual-physical expression is the serpent. But the rising serpent of kundalini is that wherein Hadit “lifts up” His head unto Nuit; and the descending dove, though a symbol of the Holy Ghost and the descent of ecstasy, is the sexual expression. It is the dove that breeds life, that carries life from one home to another in the continuity of the generations.

Please note, however, that the Book does not tell us that one is better than the other. It only says we must choose, and choose well. And it specifically says that each is love. Each is “lawful” — but not necessarily for each star in each situation.

“Choose ye well!” There is a qabalistic mystery here, I am sure of it! These words say more than they seem to say on the surface. Of course, “ye” is again YH, Yod-Heh — we are to choose Yod-Heh, a true uniting of “self and other.” But my mind continues to be drawn to “well.” Is it so simple as enumerating it in Hebrew, VHLL = 71? Should it be rendered in another language? Does it refer to “a well?” I truly do not yet know. 71 is a dark and haunting number. Oh my gosh! 71 is the value of YNVH, “dove.” Is this to be taken so literally?

“ye well” is $15 + 71 = 86$.

“Choose” (by the Anglo-Hebraic method) is ChVVSH = 85. The whole sentence is $85 + 86 = 171$. Is this of any significance? It is Sum(0-18), so the Mystic Number of Cheth. In my notebook it appears also as AL NTz, “hawk god,” and as the Latin Præmonstrator (lit., “director, guide”) and there is, of course, one inner Guide, one bridge between

interior Truth and conscious choice, in the “person” of the HGA.

I leave this without full satisfaction, but do note that the sentence can validly be read, “Choose YH, the Dove,” where YH, Yah, is expressive of Chokmah and True Will.

We are next told that AC himself has chosen. Good. Fine. Nice to know. However, the most useful part of this sentence, to most of us, is that since AC has already chosen, the instruction to “choose ye well!” must apply only to the rest of us. AC’s choices, we are told, were made based on his knowledge of the law of Peh, the Tower, the House of God. (Note: dove, serpent, Tower = 3 reciprocal paths, Daleth, Teth, and Peh = 93.) I do not know that it is necessary that the rest of us understand the part that may be private to AC; but, then, why not try? Peh, 80, corresponds to YSVD, Yesod; so it is clear what force is being employed. In Latin, 80 is both anima amore, “spirit of love,” and cor Nus, “heart of Nu.” There may also be some clues at 95, since this is the word Peh spelled in plenitude, and also MADIM, Madim, Mars; and turris, “tower.” AC’s knowledge of Peh up until that time was primarily from the H.O.G.D. 27th Path ritual, wherein some answers may be hidden (the ritual deals a lot with kundalini). The tarot card speech deals primarily with the descent of Divine Consciousness into the structure of human existence, the “fortress” of human ego.

A.C., in his O.C., elects (as though for all of us) “the serpent love, the awakening of the Kundalini.” He adds that, “The further mystery is of Peh and unsuited to the grade in which this comment is written.” (I suspect he then referred to a secret of S.S. IX° O.T.O.; but his 1912 commentary may have been a little too early for that.)

Soror Meral, putting the stops as she will, has read this, “Hé my prophet hath chosen.” She reads it as a clue to what is yet to come, the attribution of Heh to The Star. I am agnostic yet skeptical. For one thing, on April 8, 1904 e.v., AC had not yet chosen Heh! I do not think it matters much to me either way whether this is a valid interpretation.

Next comes the key sentence about Tzaddi. We now know the solution, that Tzaddi is The Emperor and that Heh is The Star. This fulfills every need, and regularly speaks its Naked Truth to us.

What is still confusing, however, is Nuit’s statement that, “All these old letters of my Book are aright.” “Her Book” is presumably the Tarot. (It could be this Book of the Law — but then, what are its “old letters”? No, only the Tarot makes sense.) Perhaps this simply means that it is correct to keep employing Hebrew, the “old letters,” although a correction in attribution is necessary.

Anytime I get into a verse with so much technical stuff, I go away feeling I have lost the real thread; so let me backtrack and recapitulate. The essential message is of love. To love freely under the stars, to worship Nuit there. Any love, carnal or otherwise, is worship of Nuit. It breaks down the warded fortress, it transforms a crumbling structure into a House of God, BYTh AL (412 + 31 = 443, q.v.). (4/3/95 EV)

58. I give unimaginable joys on earth: certainty, not faith, while in life, upon death; peace unutterable, rest, ecstasy: nor do I demand aught in sacrifice. Take it literally. The promise of Nuit. The fulfillment of Her love. The reward of Her worship.

Some have debated the punctuation of “certainty, not faith,” &c.; They have missed the point. Certainty (not requiring faith) is given both “while in life” and “upon death.” Everything here applies continuously. Continuity is the essential characteristic of Nuit, after all. This is the certainty, love, peace, joy, &c.; of the HGA; and if there is a higher vision to be discriminated from this, I have yet to find it except in theory, but rest contented in the arms of She whose Wings encompass me. (4/3/95 EV)

59. My incense is of resinous woods & gums and there is no blood therein: because of my hair the trees of Eternity. This describes Nuit’s incense, in contrast to R.H.K.’s incense which is described in Cap. III and which does have blood therein. Thus there is a clear difference in their incenses, in their modes of worship, and in who their servants are. (In contrast, Hadit is not to be worshipped!)

I do not think this has ever been adequately articulated. Within Thelema there are at least two distinctive cults — the Cult of Nuit and the Cult of Horus — whose methods are distinguished within Liber Legis.

Nuit’s incense “is of resinous woods & gums.” Many incenses — including that of Abramelin — fit this description. Both “woods” and “gums” (i.e., resins) come from trees or tree-like bushes. In burning these substances we are magically commemorating trees, and thus what are here described as “the trees of Eternity,” which are said to be Nuit’s “hair.” Furthermore, the incense has in it “no blood,” apparently for a related reason. These are the mysteries to decipher.

I speculate that there is “no blood” because blood is an animal base, and invokes an animal aspect of consciousness. Nuit’s incense is not meant to stir a Nephesh reaction (even though all incense has its effect through the Nephesh), but rather a Neshamah reaction. This feels theoretically sound.

I also have opinions concerning “the trees of Eternity.” These are subject to different views, of course. Nuit is not represented as a “center” from which emanate “filaments.” Also, it would be excessively ethno-specific to think this referred only to the hair on her head, since she could be expected to have hair over her entire body. Her entire body is one with the whole of the Universe. I have accepted these “trees” as being each of us, each microcosm, as a separate Tree of Life, whose root (Kether) is Hadit within the body of Nuit (0).

In burning the body and blood of trees — the classic twofold Eucharist, but of the plant

kingdom — we are commemorating that we are each a Tree of Life, all part of the Universal body of one lover; and we are raising our aspiration (incense) in adoration and worship of this Divine Love, even as Abraham and Abramelin did unto the Holy Guardian Angel.

AC, in his N.C., related the “tree” phrase to “the tree-like structures of the cosmos,” as depicted in his “Star-Sponge Vision.” This fits as well. Nature and supernature (down to the branching structure of our nervous systems) can as well be represented by ascending hierarchies of Trees as it can by ascending hierarchies of Wheels. This is a very wonderful concept, and says that in burning “tree incense” unto Nuit, we are commemorating the inherent structure of all reality.

(I note that AC’s “Star-Sponge Vision” began during his 9=2 initiation process. I particularly understand now how it is linked to the Mysteries of that Grade. I should probably make a note of this somewhere in my 9=2 notes.) (4/3/95 EV)

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Continue to next verse. Liber L., Cap. 1, vv. 60-66

NUIT

60	61	62	63	64	65	66
1-9	10-19	20-30	31-39	40-49	50-59	

60. My number is 11, as all their numbers who are of us. <The shape of my star is> The Five Pointed Star, with a Circle in the Middle, & the circle is Red[.] My colour is black to the blind, but the blue & gold are seen of the seeing. Also I have a secret glory for them that love me.

Another verse outlining the various “cult details” in the worship of Nuit. These may be taken at several levels; for example, simply taken as definitions, which serve as “signs of recognition.” On the other hand, they are surely subject to vast, seemingly unlimited expansion. I will try to reach the essential idea of each.

“My number is 11.” This reaches beyond basic numerology, although NV = 56 —> 11. There is an essential idea here at stake. Prior to the dictation of Liber L., 11 was not a number of any major significance in magick. Although there are many secondary associations identifiable — for example, 11th Path = Aleph = Atu 0 — I think the primary idea here relates to the Sephiroth. The Sepher Yetzirah insists that the Holy Sephiroth are “ten and not nine, ten and not eleven;” but they are numbered, we now are clear, not from 1 through 10, but from 0 through 10. Nuit reasserts the Sacred Zero. This present chapter is about “The manifestation of Nuit,” her extension into Malkuth; but that manifestation subsumes eleven stages, 0 through 10.

Of comparable importance is that 11 is not two Ones side-by-side, but Twins (cf. Heru-Ra-Ha — twin Unities) brought forth from Her. That is, they are really 1 and -1,

whose sum is 0. They express $0=2$.

A curio: Eleven is written YA (Yod-Aleph) which, spelled in full, is $111 + 20 = 131 = \text{Pan} = \text{"All."}$ She is the All, even as She is Zero.

"...11, as all their numbers who are of us." A more complex phrase than it seems on superficial examination. It means far more than that someone's motto reduces to 11! For someone's "number" to be 11 is for their essential nature to conform to the idea of 11. (Compare the contemporary phrase, "I've got your number.") I must take it that those "who are of us" — which I here take to be Thelemites in general, based on v. I:40 — intrinsically bear the attributes described in my analysis above relating Nuit to 11. They assert, by their nature, $0=2$, and Zero = All. The word "all" in this phrase — "My number is 11, as all" — seems to confirm this. Also, whereas in Hebrew NV = 56 = 11 and AL = 31, in Latin Nu = 31 and AL ("all") = 11.

"My number is $11=131$, as All=Pan who are of us."

"{The shape of my star is} The Five Pointed Star, with a Circle in the Middle, & the circle is Red." A hieroglyph subject to vast interpretation. I will resist the temptation to elaborate some of its subtleties (as in regarding it as 50), and focus on its essentials. The pentagram, with all of its many, many meanings, is especially a symbol of the Divine Feminine. Five is Heh, the Great Mother. Shekinah is the older Pentagrammaton than Yeheshua, and is equivalent (in the Qabalah) to Elohim, a name embodying the pentagram very fully. But at the heart of these maternal ideas is the perfection of the circle, her real emblem. Why red? Perhaps because it is the color of Shakti? Or, more likely, because it is the center of Nuit, i.e., Hadit.

Her color: A physical fact; but also especially to indicate that Her color is that of deep (nocturnal) space, which is a living and vibrant thing, not mere darkness. (And this is also the real living nature of the unconscious.) What we call "the dark" is filled with light!

The last sentence, then, is simply the real promise of Her worship. (4/3/95 EV)

61. But to love me is better than all things: if under the night-stars in the desert thou presently burnest mine incense before me invoking me with a pure heart and the Serpent flame therein, thou shalt come a little to lie in my bosom. For one kiss wilt thou then be willing to give all: but whoso gives one particle of dust shall lose all in that hour. Ye shall gather goods and store of women and spices; ye shall wear rich jewels; ye shall exceed the nations of the earth in splendour & pride; but always in the love of me, and so shall ye come to my joy. I charge you earnestly to come before me in a single robe and covered with a rich headdress. I love you I yearn to you. Pale or purple, veiled or voluptuous[,] I who am all pleasure and purple and drunkenness of the innermost sense desire you. Put on the wings and arouse the coiled splendour within you: come unto me

[Thus we commence the seventh decade, attributed perhaps to A'ayin or, more likely, to

Zayin. This is also the decade that crosses from Cap. I to Cap. II.]

I suspect this is the longest verse in Liber L. In great beauty and majesty, it discloses the essential method of the worship of Nuit. For the most part, it speaks for itself. Every time the Gnostic Mass is read, these words hold the attention of every participant. After over a hundred masses performed and many more witnessed, I cannot begin to give voice, in this narrow space, to all that has been stirred by this verse.

“But to love me is better than all things.” How true. The reward is intrinsic, instantaneous, and reciprocal.

Next follows an instruction for worship. It can be seen as metaphorical or symbolic; but I have always taken it literally, simply. The heart must be pure and aflame, and that flame of the risen kundalini. “For one kiss...” is literally true. The “one particle of dust” is Hadit, and its sentence is a beautiful promise.

We must remember that the Book was dictated in Egypt, within the context of the local group mind playing a roll in its imagery. The theology is Egyptian, the setting is the Sahara, and the ethics are reminiscent of Islam. This is helpful to our understanding of many parts of the Book, but especially of this verse. It is helpful again with the sentence beginning, “Ye shall gather....” It has often been pointed out that this sentence contains the one decisive sexism of the Book. “Women” are clearly lumped, in Islamic style, along with other property. Yet I also note that Nuit is neither encouraging nor discouraging this behavior. She is saying, “Surround yourself with anything you think matters, signs of wealth and pleasure or even pride — regardless of what the yogis might say — but do this always in the love of me.” It is a further statement of the “To me” of v. 51, ten verses earlier. The meaning is clear enough.

The “single robe” is the aura, and the “rich headdress” the golden cross of the raised Uræus; or it may be taken literally, as the paraphernalia of a ritual act of worship.

She is intoxication of the innermost, not the outermost. Any inflaming of the outer is sanctified by its relationship to the innermost ecstasy. Thus does it become an act of worship.

“come unto me!” has at least two levels of interpretation.

(NB — The phrase “come unto me” occurs 26 times in The Bible, and would have been very familiar to AC. Some of the best known are in the Gospels, such as Matt. 11:28.)
(4/3/95 EV)

62. At all my meetings with you shall the priestess say — and her eyes shall burn with desire as she stands bare and rejoicing in my Secret Temple — To me! To me! calling forth the flame of the hearts of all in her love-chant.

NOTE: I have capitalized "Secret Temple" to conform to the original manuscript.

AC, at least as a first layer, interprets this literally. Thus did he incorporate it into Liber XV.

"my meetings." Not, for example, general Thelemic meetings, but Nuit's meetings — with one or more worshipper(s) ("you").

"the priestess." This can be taken literally, referring to the essential idea that the desire force is to be roused and directed. But at its primary level, this "priestess" is an inner agent — a representative of the Priestess Archetype (Gimel) — who stands within "my secret temple," i.e. within the inner adytum within the heart of the Adept (Gimel descends to Tiphereth). Nuit is infinite. She is inconceivable. Any manifestation to image of Her is not Her, but an emissary of Her. This verse speaks of that emissary. This priestess, ultimately, is the inner accessible image of Nuit, her eyes aflame with desire, bare, rejoicing, and chanting "To me!" to draw the flame of the worshipper unto her. (2/18/01 EV)

63. Sing the rapturous love-song unto me! Burn to me perfumes! Wear to me jewels! Drink to me, for I love you! I love you!

Literal and simple, reiterating prior verses. But remember that to MH = 418. [MH is a Greek word that — in Crowley's time — was believed to be pronounced like the English "me." It means "not."] See Energized Enthusiasm for an instruction on this verse in practice. (4/3/95 EV)

64. I am the blue-lidded daughter of Sunset; I am the naked brilliance of the voluptuous night-sky
(A transparently Chesed verse!)

More beautiful imagery. Here she is not of the day, but of sunset and night. In the West, the essential formula is "death = ecstasy." She is Night receiving Tum into her bosom, the arched goddess who swallows and devours all that transverse the sky — having been borne (and born) from her womb in the East. (4/3/95 EV)

65. To me! To me!

Ecstasy. Proud and strong surrender. Ecstasy as superconsciousness.

GEMATRIA: TO MH = 418 = Abrahadabra (Greek pun on "to me," and means "The Not"). 65 = ADNI, Adonai, &c.;

AC wrote (Equinox of the Gods) that the words of this verse were spoken "diminuendo down to pianissimo, indicating the withdrawal of the goddess." (4/3/95 EV)

66. The Manifestation of Nuit is at an end.

Cf. v. 1. The object is attained, completed, fulfilled, concluded.

GEMATRIA: 66 = Sum(0-11), i.e. the idea of 11 (Nuit) expanded through all of its aspects and circumstances and thus now brought to fulfilled manifestation.

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Back to the beginning. Liber L., Cap. 2

HADIT

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34		
35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50		
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66		
67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79					

(v. 67) 1. Nu! the hiding of Hadit.

This verse is the obvious complement of Cap. I, v. 1. Cross-reference should be made to the portion of this record addressing that verse, in order to put in perspective this completion or complementation.

This chapter is witnessed from the point of view of Nuit. It is within Her that Hadit is hidden. Even as Cap. I, v. 1 was v. 1 of the entire Book of the Law — corresponding to Hadit as Kether — so is this v. 67 of the Book overall. 67 is the value of Binah (BYNH).

Hadit is the Hidden One, Hades. THIS identification is of tremendous importance. He is Lord of Hell, the Hidden Place, the unconscious, etc. Even the obvious Mercurial elements we shall see are due to Hermes being a guide of the dead, conductor in the realm of Hades. The chief difference, however, is that where Hades is purely God of the Dead, Had is God of Life. This, too, is part of what we shall encounter in the verses ahead.

GEMATRIA: Hades is alternately [Greek letters] `ADHS = 213 or `AIDHS = 223. The name literally means, “the unseen.”

666 has a brief but sound discussion of all this in the New Comment (N.C.), where he observes, “Every individual manifests the whole; and the whole conceals every individual. The soul interprets the universe; and the universe veils the soul. Nature understands herself by becoming self-conscious in her units; and the consciousness loses its sense of separateness by dissolution in Her.” (4/3/95 EV; tweaked slightly 12/11/07 EV)

(v. 68) 2. Come! all ye and learn the secret that hath not yet been revealed. I Hadit am the complement of Nu my bride. I am not extended, and Khabs is the name of my

House

Immediately the tone is utterly changed! This verse is practically the patter of a circus barker, even a little clownish. This effect swarms around the first person pronoun which is at the heart of the verse and stands in acute contrast to the whole flavor of Nuit's words in Cap. I.

Presumably the first sentence merely summons our attention to the fact that there is a further Mystery than that of Nuit. Beyond that which is revealed is that which is Hidden, SVD = 70 = Capricorn, Set = Had, &c.;

It is in this verse that we are told certain basics which we have long come to take for granted. Hadit is the complement of Nuit. He speaks of Nuit as his "bride," which further establishes the particular nature of their polarity.

He is an unextended point. "Unextended" refers to more than spatial dimensions. AC had already developed, in his essay Berashith, the concept of every characteristic whatsoever being a "dimension" in which an object could be "extended." The idea of "the unextended" (or unconditioned) he represented mathematically as 00 (zero to the zeroth power). Mathematically this equals 1; and qabalistically "the unextended" is the Point which we call Kether, Sephirah 1.

[NOTE: Any number to the zeroth power equals 1, since $x^0 = xy^{-y} = xy \div xy = 1$; and $0^0 = 1$ by definition (since division by 0 is undefined, and it otherwise conforms to the general case of $x \div x$).]

His "House" is Khabs, the (Light of the) Star which is at the heart of every man and every woman. (We are later told, in v. 6, that he is "the core of every star.") This identifies Him as the inmost point of each of us. A more complex development is possible here which He elaborated for me in the writing of the 3° (Artisan) ritual of T.'.O.'.T.'.; but I can say simply in this place that Khabs is closely related to Kokab, which means both "star" and "Mercury." Also, "House" is Beth, the letter of Mercury. "Khabs is the name of my House" essentially says, "Mercury = Mercury" — and appears to affirm the Mercury = Beth attribution to the Hebrew alphabet — and "name" is a distinctive Mercury concept. Hadit is housed, or contained, within each star that is an aspect of the body of Nuit.

666, in the New Comment (N.C.), refers to this as "the impersonal identity [Had] within the individuality [Khabs] of 'every man and every woman.'" (4/3/95 EV; tweaked slightly 12/11/07 EV)

(v. 69) 3. In the sphere I am everywhere, the centre as she the circumference is nowhere found.

(v. 70) 4. Yet she shall be known & I never.

In v. 3, punctuation in the original manuscript (used above) varies from that which AC employed when editing The Book for publication. He was explicitly authorized to edit

punctuation as he saw fit. Nonetheless, in seeking to understand The Book, I believe we should draw our own conclusions about original intent. Authorized editing doesn't infer inspired editing! — In this case, I don't think the change significantly alters the meaning, but there are shadings of meaning distinguishing the two. Here they are:

In the sphere I am everywhere, the centre as she the circumference is nowhere found.
In the sphere I am everywhere the centre, as she, the circumference, is nowhere found.

In the original, Hadit's first statement is simply that he is everywhere — inferred period! Then he goes on to supplement it. In AC's edited version, he says he is "everywhere the centre." I think the composition is better in the second than in the first (though still portraying atypical syntax), and it likely expresses the underlying meaning better; but there is something raw, simplistic, and thus attractive about the untouched original.

Verse 3 declares a mathematical property of any point soever within an infinite space. Thus, the "sphere" in question must be infinite (which explains why its limit is "nowhere found"). Every point is the center. Also, perceptually, the point of view composes reality so as to be centered around it. We are told here, between the lines, that this is true for all points of view. This necessarily means that all points of view are entirely equal in value and legitimacy. (Most people do not realize that conceptual orientation is locational, even though our language is loaded with words and phrases that treat point of view or opinion as locational, as if within an "idea space": "my position," "where I'm at," "where I'm coming from," "are we getting closer (or farther apart) on that," etc.)

Again, these verses continue the definition of Had's and Nu's basic polarity. She is the circumference, He the center; but, as He is the Point of View itself (eye = Capricorn = 70 = SVD), He is never seen. She, on the other hand, is "known." That is, all that is "seen" in any fashion is Her.

I suppose I should mention that "he vs. she" is also part of their essential distinction or polarization.

AC, in his commentaries of these verses, identifies RHK as Kether. I question this. Hadit is best identified as Kether (and, by correspondences inherent in Cap. II, v. 8, Harpocrates as well). RHK is, in one sense, the entire Tree of Life extended from that seed, with special relevance to Tiphereth and (in another sense) Geburah. (But as the generic "stand in" for the HGA, RHK would correspond to Yechidah.)

I should also mention that, even with this utterly reversed reference frame from Nuit to Hadit, these are still the words of the Holy Guardian Angel, that inmost seed of Light within each of us. (Supplemented 7/21/06 EV)

(v. 71) 5. Behold! the rituals of the old time are black[.] Let the evil ones be cast away[;]
let the good ones be purged by the prophet. Then shall this Knowledge go aright.
What "Knowledge?" Based on the preceding verse it is the knowledge of Nuit. (Does the

capital “K” imply that “Knowledge” is a proper noun, i.e., Da’ath (DOTh)? Nothing leads me to believe it is so.)

AC, as “the prophet,” is given specific instructions about the New Order. The essential information here is that some of the existing rituals are “good” and some are to be “purged” (revised to conform to the new teachings); some are “evil” and are to be dropped. Note that “black” cannot mean “evil,” since all of the old rituals are “black,” but some are “good” and some “evil.” Perhaps “black” means simply “Osirian,” since “Osiris is a black god.” In any case, the wording suggests that they are incapable of reflecting light to their witnesses.

“Evil” and “good” are polarities entirely atypical of this Book. A purely functional understanding is possible here.

Also, a specifically ritualistic approach is ordained in order that “this Knowledge” “shall... go aright.”

(At a later time I want to meditate more deeply on the meaning if “Knowledge” is taken as DOTh.) (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 72) 6. I am the flame that burns in every heart of man and in the core of every star. I am Life and the giver of Life yet therefore is the knowledge of me the knowledge of death

This is one of the most important defining verses of Hadit in the entire Chapter — possibly the most often quoted as well.

Hadit is the very spark of life, the essence of Life itself. This is what ultimately separates him from Hades and identifies him more closely with that other Hidden One, Amoun, who is very much a God of life and procreation. He is the Central Seed (atom or Atma) within each of us, and also that seed which is scattered and sown with vast prodigality.

The inmost flame of the human heart is stated to be identical to the flame within “the core of every star.” I believe this means actual physical stars in addition to each Khabs; for the Secret Doctrine has long equated human consciousness with sunlight and starlight, and found consciousness itself in the latter.

But again we are reminded that He, simply, is Life. All life. Each spark, each seed, and all sparks, all seeds. As Yod is both Kether and Chokmah, point and line, so is Had both seed-spark of life and flowing stream of life. “Life” and “the giver of Life” are one and the same, are this Stream. He is, therefore, every bit as omnipresent as Nuit, but with a sublime distinction: the characteristic of Reality as Hadit is always to experience itself as centered in a single out-looking point.

It is, then, self-evident that the “knowledge” of Hadit is “the knowledge of death.” This is clear from two different angles. First, life and death are two aspects of the common idea

of Life. The Knowledge of one is the knowledge of the other, for the eternal Serpent Life (Hadit) passes rhythmically through both phrases. Yet again, we are already told that Hadit is never known. He is certainly not “known” in time. Nor can he be known (objectified), when what one is IS THAT. To know Him is to be Him; i.e., to Be. There can be no objectification of Life, for that would mean one was apart from it, outside of it. Finally, the real and profound knowledge of Hadit would be samadhi on Life itself, which would dissolve the distinction of an individual point of view, i.e., dissolve the Individuality.

666 (N.C.) subtly plays on this by saying that, since Hadit cannot be known, there is no death, but rather an awakening to impersonal immortality. He also gives a wonderful and precise discussion of the relationship of the ego to the Self:

One may attain to be aware that one is but a particular ‘child’ of the Play of Hadit and Nuit; one’s personality is then perceived as being a disguise. It is not only not a living thing, as one had thought; but a mere symbol without substance, incapable of life. It is the conventional form of a certain cluster of thoughts, themselves the partial and hieroglyphic symbols of an ‘ego.’ The conscious and sensible ‘man’ is to his Self just what the printed letters on this page are to me who have caused them to manifest in colour and form. They are arbitrary devices for conveying my thought; I could use French or Greek just as well. Nor is this thought, here conveyed, more than one ray of my Orb; and even that whole Orb is but the garment of Me. The analogy is precise; therefore when one becomes “the knower,” it involves the ‘death’ of all sense of the Ego. One perceives one’s personality precisely as I now do these printed letters; and they are forgotten, just as, absorbed in my thought, the trained automatism of my mind and body expresses that thought in writing, without attention on my part, still less with identification of the extremes involved in the process.

(4/3/95 EV)

(v. 73) 7. I am the Magician and the Exorcist I am the axle of the wheel and the cube in the circle[.] Come unto me is a foolish word: for it is I that go.

We have already seen Him as related to a Mercurial idea; and here that becomes even more strikingly clear. The “Magician” is Beth, Mercury, and especially related to Yod, Virgo. The “Exorcist” is but the opposite side of that coin. And “axle” is, in Hebrew, Yod, the axle (both center and shaft, Kether and Chokmah) of the Wheel of Life or Wheel of Fortune.

The Magician is both Word and Will. He is also likely used here to represent the weaver of illusion, the formulator of Maya (see Liber Magi and Liber 418). “Magician and the Exorcist” are then the creator and banisher of a given reality, that which utterly defines and patterns reality by its passage &c.;

If “the cube in the circle.” means the “cube within the sphere,” then it refers to the Enochian model of the cubical Universe within concentric spherical Aethyrs. If “circle” is

literally meant, however, then we have an altar within a magical circle, and a phallic stone or cube existing within the feminine symbol. “Cube” and “stone,” of course, depict the object of the Great Work whereby “Father” and “Son” are seen as One (ABN). “Cube” also requires six sides, hence a solar (which also always means stellar) idea within the circle of Nuit, or (within the microcosm) of a given ego.

Correspondent Robert Westmoreland has written that “cube in the circle” suggests to him the Islamic Kaaba, “which is a cubic stone surrounded by an ever-moving circle of the faithful. The word kaaba comes from the Arabic word kab, meaning ‘cube.’” I am very excited about this perspective — it may even have been a specific image that inspired Crowley’s mind during the writing, and it integrates many of the other ideas expressed here.

In any case, this “axle” and “cube” are both something at the center, and the “wheel” and “circle” are both circular or cyclical. Both express Centrum in Trigono Centri, and many ideas we have already associated with Hadit, including the phallic, creative, central, vital, &c.;

The last sentence merely reiterates, perhaps more clearly, what we already have discovered. Unlike Nuit, He does not say, “Come unto me;” for it is He who responds to Her love-song. His nature is that of going, the essential nature of Deity. In this there is a marvelous pun; for we shall learn in v. 16 that His name may begin with a “V” and vadit is Latin for “He goes.” (Last updated 12/15/07 EV)

(v. 74) 8. Who worshipped Heru-pa-kraath have worshipped me; ill, for I am the worshipper.

The closest one can come to worshipping Hadit, the Hidden One, He who Goes, is to worship the Silence.

Harpocrates (Heru-pa-kraath) is also attributed to Kether, or to Kether within the Ayin Soph Aur. In his commentary to 777 Revised, AC wrote, “Against the number Zero Harpocrates is Silence and Rest. Amoun is the Concealed.” And Amoun is Hadit. In N.C. he equates Harpocrates with “the Secret Self of every man.”

Yet, we are admonished, the whole idea of worshipping Hadit is foolish. It is a wrong idea. Thus, this Book describes the distinctive cults of Nuit and Horus, but not one of Hadit, except as one Livest as Him.

In N.C., AC continued: “It is bad Magick to admit that one is other than one’s inmost Self. One should plunge passionately into every possible experience; by doing so one is purged of these personal prejudices which we took so stupidly for ourselves....” (4/3/95 EV; edited 7/21/06 EV)

(v. 75) 9. Remember all ye that existence is pure joy[;] that all the sorrows are but as

shadows[;] they pass & are done; but there is that which remains
A fundamental doctrine of Thelema. Here the God who is the Magician and Life, and especially therefore the mysteries of the Lingam — who is Existence itself in any way we may conceive of such — tells us that Existence is pure joy. The rest is Maya, the Devil, the game, the shadow play inevitably cast by so great a light. Existence is eternal, immortal. It “remains.” (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 76) 10. O prophet! thou hast ill will to learn this writing.

(v. 77) 11. I see thee hate the hand & the pen but I am stronger.

(v. 78) 12. Because of me in Thee which thou knewest not

(v. 79) 13. for why? Because thou wast the knower, and me.

The historical relevance of these verses is well recorded. Crowley, on 4/9/04 e.v., was a confirmed Buddhist. He seriously held that all is Sorrow. His ego rejected the teachings of v. 9, and fought mightily against them. But the Way of Hadit, of ecstasy and joy, was greater. The ego could not prevail against the deepest Seed of Self, nor the personality's obstinacy against True Will.

The basic message is that Hadit — our Hidden Self — is the fulcrum of all leverage, the mighty Source, the inescapable Truth. From such a place we are invulnerable and all-potent; against it, the personality that we mistake for ourselves is impotent.

In v. 11 (v. 77 of the entire Book), note “hand” refers, by a pun, to Yod or Hadit as well. “stronger” is OZ, 77 (or XI, “Strength”).

v. 12 (v. 78): The “me in Thee” corresponds to 78 in multiple ways — one of which is that 78 is Sum(1-12), the Mystic Number of the Path of Beth, Mercury. 78 is also the value that AC mistakenly gave to the name “Aiwass” (as AYVAS) for several years.

v. 13 (v. 79): AC is Hadit, who is “the knower;” and so are we each. More deeply, this entire Book has been dictated by AC's HGA, of whom all these things are true as well. The strange grammatical use of “me” rather than “I” probably means that AC was MH, “Not” — that is, of the Zero rather than of the One (“I”). This, then, serves to clarify the correct interpretation of the prior verse which might otherwise have been missed: “Because of MH in Thee which thou knewest not.” (7/5/95 EV; tweaked 12/15/07 EV)

(v. 80) 14. Now let there be a veiling of this shrine: now let the light devour men and eat them up with blindness.

This entire chapter is aimed at “hiding” Hadit. Now, having disclosed his attributes as extensively as the “Unextended One” intends, He calls for a veiling, or hiding, of that Truth. It cannot be seen of itself, but only by the blinding light which drapes it. This, it will be recalled, is “starlight;” for Hadit's “house” is Khabs.

Also, a “veiling of this shrine” recalls the Tabernacle of the Wilderness, the Holy of Holies of which was veiled. (The Holy of Holies was the inmost part of the tabernacle,

even as Hadit is the inmost part of each of us.) The veil was paroketh (PRKTh). This present veil is pure light, which is devouring; i.e., it “swallows them up.” Perhaps it also means a “stepping down” from Supernal Truth to the L.V.X. of the Rosy Cross.

The “blinding light” at this exact juncture is a marvelous representation of the 8220;lightning flash” effects of the Path of Peh — perhaps inferred by the fact that this is verse 80 of the entire Book. (Revised 12/16/07 EV)

(v. 81) 15. For I am perfect, being Not; and my number is nine by the fools but with the just I am eight and one in eight: Which is vital, for I am none indeed[.] The Empress and the King are not of me for there is a further secret
Here begin the numerical puzzles. As with Nuit’s “11,” I do not think conventional gematria is the primary key. I have accumulated many ideas on this verse over the years and, by proceeding carefully, I believe we can unveil important doctrines.

“I am perfect, being Not.” He is Nuit, although in another sense Her complement. They are not separate, but identical; not distinct, but, rather, distinctive views of One Thing, even as a volume of space is indistinguishable from the infinite number of geometric points which compose it.

“my number is nine by the fools; but with the just I am eight...” Both “fools” and “just” hint at Aleph and Lamed, even with the lower case letters. I am not sure I know to what these refer exactly, though I assert they cannot be overlooked. Throughout this work, “fools” (a word that tends to show in Kether verses such as this one) has consistently had its common meaning, much more so than acting as an allusion to Aleph.

Let us start, though, by comparing 9 and 8, to try to discover the framework wherein this is meaningful.

I firmly believe the key is in Yesod vs. Hod. I will return to this.

Even as 11 was found meaningful by plenary spelling of its numerals to produce 131, so we must note that 9 = Teth = 419 and 8 = Cheth = 418. Now, this is interesting! Although Teth, 419, is a valid way of expressing the phenomena of Hadit, He is much more keenly known as 418, Abrahadabra, the Key-Word of the Aeon, which veils Him in its very center (again, Had = Sod).

Now, he is “perfect;” and the “perfect” was represented in Cap. 1 by (among other details) the numbers 8, 80, 418. Is this important here?

9 = 32. 8 = 23. Both are the expansion resulting from the interplay of 2 and 3, the Binary and the Ternary. Now, 2 is the play of the Magus, and 3 is the Substance, or Maya, which he molds; that is, they are Chokmah and Binah, Will and Love, Chiah and Neshamah (ChYH + NShMH = 418). The correct way to view Hadit is not by the two-dimensional working out of the idea of 3 (Binah or Gimel), but by the

three-dimensional working out of the idea of 2 (Chokmah or Beth); that is, by the Word made flesh, or Will living and expressing itself through the fabric of substance or Love. This is, in fact, just another way of describing the actualization of experience produced by the constant play of Hadit through the infinite aspects of the Body of Nuit. This is the Rosy Cross.

Finally — though very superficially, perhaps suited entirely to the bourgeois — the numeral 9 shows a circle which extends into a line that comes to a final ending. It terminates. This is a profane view of Life. But 8 shows a different view of Life. The numeral 8 is eternal, never ending, infinitely retwining about the same figure without the need to stop or retrace. Of all ten numerals, only 0 also has this characteristic.

* * * * *

Which returns us to the original idea, that the Key here is in the comparison of Yesod and Hod. I have one absolute confirmation of this: YSVD = 80, and one of its great numbers is 81 (all four being 9, 81, 369, and 3,321); HVD enumerates to 15. This present verse is the 15th verse of this chapter, and the 81st verse of the entire Book! It deals with the interrelationship of the Mysteries of Yesod (81) and Hod (15).

To the fools — the “windbags” — Hadit is 9, Yesod. Life is viewed through the organs of procreation which, from the infinite circle of life, extend a single current downward into a finite and mortal termination, even as in the numeral 9. In the verses that follow, Hadit makes entirely clear that He is the “serpent-force.” To “the fools” this is expressed primarily through the genitals. It is what, in v. 25, He calls drooping down of His head (cf., again, the shape of the numeral 9).

But to others — “the just,” those who have made an “adjustment,” those, perhaps, who have set certain currents within themselves into a balanced disposition — He is 8. In Hod, the same “serpent-force” is equally important, but no longer through the vehicle of sexual procreation. Where Yesod corresponds to the genitals, Hod corresponds to the channels of nerve force. Hod is androgynous, sexually self-contained because of the coexistence of opposites, the internal balance of polarities. Here the work, as well as the symbolism, of kundalini is imminently important; and it is as this that Hadit is viewed “with the just.” It is what, in v. 26, he calls lifting up His head so that “I and my Nuit are one.”

Had is Hod. Even the Hebrew spelling HVD is significant: Vav is the Hebrew conjunction “and,” so HVD would have been “The Empress (D) and (V) The King (H)” if only Heh were The Emperor — which it is not! But Heh is the Hebrew definite article “the,” so the same letters could be read as ha-Vad (HVD), “The (H) Hierophant (V) and Empress (D).” (See next verse following.) Unfortunately, however interesting, this does not solve the numerical puzzles of v. 16, so it is not a complete solution: Hod explains, in part, why Had is 8, and reinforces all the other abundant Mercury symbolism but goes no further to resolve the other numerical puzzles.

Thus for 8 vs. 9.

He then says: "...I am eight, and one in eight." Here are many subtle communications. Several truths are existent at once; but one central idea subsumes them all.

Of all of our numerals, only 0 and 8 may be drawn unendingly without lifting the pen or changing direction; and they are the numerals that are traditionally related to infinity. In fact, as 0 & [infinity] they express the nature of Nuit (0) and Hadit (8).

Take a string and make a 0. This is Nuit. Double it over to make two 0s tangent to each other, [infinity sign]. Here, the whole is still Nuit — nothing has been added or subtracted — but she appears in mirror image, "divided for love's sake," two perfect replicas of the original 0. Yet, without anything being added, something new is now seen! For the single point where the two circles tangentially touch is now defined and distinct; and this point is the very symbol of Hadit! He has manifested as a result of Her "division;" yet She is no less infinite. Divide ($0/2=0$), add ($0+0=0$), multiply ($0\times0=0$) — and Understand.

This is the One in the Eight; or, rather, the "eight, and one in eight."

It has been observed that if an 8 and a 1 are superposed, they essentially make a Caduceus, and also a glyph of balanced kundalini.

Also, the only Qabalistic idea that is, at once, both 8 and 1 is Mercury, who wields that Caduceus; and we have seen throughout that Mercury is a superb representation of the self-description of Hadit. As Hod, Mercury is 8; as Beth, Mercury is Atu I.

There are other numerical ideas — especially the number 414, which is "one in eight," and Azoth, and Ain Soph Aur, &c.; — which play this out; but I believe I have stated the essential doctrine.

Not only is 414 AYN SVPh AVR; but $AYN\ SVPh = AVR = 207$. This is, therefore, formed symbolically by the "0-[infinity]" string analogy I gave before, where the Limitless (AYN SVPh = 207) perfectly duplicated itself without addition or subtraction to form that Same Thing which is here represented by 414. It is what I have often called the discovery of the serpentine (or rhythmic, or vibrational) patterns inherent in the Limitless which are recognized as the Light. Hence my original Neophyte Pantacle (rejected by my Zelator): [illustration here in original]

To continue with the verse:

"Which is vital, for I am none indeed." First, we already know He is "none," i.e., Nuit. But as His nature is To Go, He is the same "none" in deed. Similarly, I take the first phrase to mean that this 8, this Serpent-force &c.;, is entirely vital. It is the stuff of life. The life of the attained yogi is rich, vital, living, even if the exterior sometimes looks withdrawn &c.;

The last sentence primarily says that His name is not spelled Heh-Daleth, as AC probably first thought. This sets up for the next verse. But I also note that The Emperor & the Empress are Sulphur and Salt and other obvious sexual polarities. There is the formulation of IV + III = VII = Cheth, 418, &c.; But this is explicitly not meant here. (4/3/95 EV; minor editing 7/21/06 EV)

(v. 82) 16. I am The Empress & the Hierophant. Thus eleven as my bride is eleven. First, we already know He is "eleven, as my bride is eleven," for He truly is of the stuff of Nuit. But the rest of the verse — for all of its simplicity — has been terribly difficult for students in the past.

The correct spelling is

V A D
(Vav Aleph Daleth)

By letter values, $6 + 1 + 4 = 11$.

By Tarot values, $V + 0 + III = 8$.

The resulting implicit name, Vadit, is Latin for "He goes."

Notice that these three letters correspond to three of the four Paths connecting to Chokmah; and Hadit's correspondence to Chokmah (at one level of symbolism) has been clearly established. Heh, the remaining Path, is The Star, or Khabs, the name of His House, and exteriorizes into the consciousness of Tiphereth.

There may also be a secondary meaning here. For example, The Empress is Venus; and The Hierophant is Taurus, ruled by Venus. Or perhaps He is saying that He is "Love [The Empress], the Revealer of the Mysteries [the Hierophant]."

It is tempting (as AC did) to treat the Aleph in VAD as the "one" ($A = 1$) in "eight" ($V + III$); but these are two entirely separate scales of meaning, and make a mockery of the Qabalah. (In other words, Aleph = 1 by its actual letter value, but Vav + Daleth = 8 through Tarot attributions, which are of a different "scale.") (Revised 12/16/07 EV)

(v. 83) 17. Hear me, ye people of sighing
The sorrows of pain and regret
Are left to the dead and the dying
The folks that not know me as yet.
Pretty simple. Cf. Liber Tzaddi.

Of course, Hadit is never to be known! A cynic could turn this, therefore, into a pretty desperate situation. I think, however, that a little license must be allowed to this "Aiwass Soft Shoe Shuffle."

The main point is that life is joyous (cf. v. 9).

The Greek ALGHMA, “sorrow,” enumerates to 83, the number of this verse; but the same number also gives Fiat Lux, “Let there be Light (L.V.X.)!”

666, in N.C., expands on the theme of v. 9 here. The “shadows” are not of Hadit, i.e., are not Real. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 84) 18. These are dead, these fellows; they feel not. We are not for the poor and sad: the lords of the earth are our kinsfolk.

Continues the theme, and begins the very Teth-like descriptions of Hadit, his gifts, and his ethics. Thelema, without apology, is elitist. Though the law is for all, there is no room within us for “the poor and sad” aspects, or inferior aspects, or defeated aspects, of our own being.

In a more constrained fashion, this elitism applies to those other stars in our environment as well, although here other issues commingle with those of the present verse; consider, for example, Cap. II, v. 58.

They are “dead,” i.e., they are not of Life, Hadit. Also, they “are not for the poor and sad,” because the consciousness of Nuit and Hadit dissolves all sadness.

An important consideration here is that all personalities — all personae — are “shadows” by definition. They consist of unreality. They are but distorted reflections, greater or lesser degrees of clarity reflecting the true Light for which they are the vehicle.

666, N.C.: “The sole test of one’s lordship is to know what one’s True Will is, and to do it.” (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 85) 19. Is a God to live in a dog? No! but the highest are of us. They shall rejoice, our chosen: who sorroweth is not of us.

From this, and many other verses, it is clear that Liber L. uses animals to represent the lower, subhuman aspect of consciousness. (Native Americans would, therefore, dispute that this Book is for “all,” since they regard all in the animal kingdom as their brothers.) At a first estimation we can say that “dog” refers to the Nephesh (“animal soul”) aspect; but this is not always correct, and, in the present verse, I think this simple understanding would lead us astray.

The Qabalistic reversal of “God” into “dog” is the very kind of reversal of image implied by the metaphors of shadows and reflections to which allusion has been made in recent verses. The reality called “God” — in fact, any autonomous reality — is not able to abide in a pale, shadowy reflection of itself. We also note the Arab influence that the Sahara wrought on this Book, for “God” and “dog” are characteristic Arabic references to the

Highest and the lowest.

But the Doctrine of Hermes gives us cause to pause; for the Highest does replicate its patterns even into the lowest. Yet does it “indwell” it? In any full sense, certainly not. I think the principle here is that the Temple must be rightly builded before the God can indwell it. Here, then, “the highest” means those who have forged of their own raw matter the most fit temples. (4/3/95 EV; tweaked 12/18/07 EV)

(v. 86) 20. Beauty and strength, leaping laughter and delicious languor, force and fire, are of us.

To be taken literally and simply, as a continuation of this line of discussion. “Beauty and strength:” the Holy Guardian Angel unites the attributes of Tiphereth and Geburah, 5=6 and 6=5. I seem to recall that “force and fire” are part of the analysis of Abrahadabra.

AC correctly instructs that, “As soon as one realizes one’s self as Hadit, one obtains all His qualities. It is all a question of doing one’s Will... Beauty and Strength come from doing one’s will; you have only to look at any one who is doing it to recognize the glory of it.” (Last revised 12/18/07 EV)

(v. 87) 21. We have nothing with the outcast and the unfit: let them die in their misery: For they feel not. Compassion is the vice of kings: stamp down the wretched & the weak: this is the law of the strong: this is our law and the joy of the world. Think not, o king, upon that lie: That Thou Must Die: verily thou shalt not die, but live! Now let it be understood: If the body of the King dissolve, he shall remain in pure ecstasy for ever Nuit Hadit Ra-Hoor-Khuit. The Sun, Strength & Sight, Light these are for the servants of the Star & the Snake

The same theme has been repeated so often in this chapter that I keep feeling that I should be responding to its subtleties, to why it is expressed one way instead of another in a given place. But it is all much the same. The term “unfit” is now introduced. “Fitness” implies both an appropriateness to a given task, and a healthy readiness and preparedness based on strength.

There is also advice not to obsess about the fallen; to realize that their ability to feel pain is as proportionately small as their ability to feel joy. This part is really advice to the yogi: If you spend your energies fretting about the outcast, you can’t meditate!

“Compassion is the vice of kings.” (But see also v. 52.) Yet, is it not the highest virtue of the Mysteries East and West alike, whose repository is Chesed? But Chesed is still below the Abyss. The “kings” are the Adepts; and we are here told that the Adepts of Thelema are so constituted that they are characteristically inclined to be compassionate — and, if they are thus found to be short-sighted...? It is a vice, but surely the best of them; and all in the service of Hadit, of Life.

None of us — certainly not a king — is counseled by this Book to be anything but what

we genuinely are. We must live according to the characteristics which compose us, whether otherwise called virtue, vice, or what-not.

We are told that the law of the Current of Life is survival of the fittest. This is honest fact, whether our “civilized” morality likes it or not. Again, “fitness” is an essential characteristic.

We are told by the God of Death that Death is the great lie. (Is Hadit-Hades not also Hermes?) The text can be taken very literally. Note, though, that it especially speaks of the death of “the body of the King.” It is to the Adepts of Thelema that these results are especially promised, to them that the conscious ecstasy of death is made so certain. O, the rapture of the Rosy Cross! “Nuit! Hadit! Ra-Hoor-Khuit!”

“servants of the Star & the Snake”: I take this to mean the servants of Nuit & Hadit. (Cf. Liber 418, 8th Aethyr, where star, serpent, and sword correspond to Nu, Had, & RHK, respectively. (12/18/07 EV)

(v. 88) 22. I am the Snake that giveth Knowledge & Delight and bright glory, and stir the hearts of men with drunkenness. To worship me take wine and strange drugs whereof I will tell my prophet & be drunk thereof! They shall not harm ye at all. It is a lie, this folly against self. The exposure of innocence is a lie. Be strong, o man, lust, enjoy all things of sense and rapture: fear not that any God shall deny thee for this. He identifies Himself further and overtly as Kundalini. The “Snake” idea also confirms the 8 or [infinity symbol] symbolism, among other things; and, especially (as the eighth version in the current set) conforms to the relationship of Hod to Kundalini phenomena.

“Knowledge & Delight” could be a Hod-Netzach polarity, but are surely, instaed, on a higher plane. “Knowledge” is likely gnosis, and the rapture of the Rosy Cross (intimate knowledge). This result is intoxicating (of the inmost, not the outermost — see Liber LXV.)

The admonishment about drugs knocks down old taboos. However, the abuse of these, as is well shown in our time, can destroy. Yet what is destroyed is only shadow. One’s health, one’s sanity, and one’s life may be destroyed; but from Hadit’s point of view, that which is truly you, beyond those shadows, will be harmed not at all!

With their proper use, there is happier news!

It is the unfit, the outcast, the sorrowful, the pained, the inwardly impoverished — the shadow souls ” who are most likely to be damaged by drugs. The sane, healthy, fit, joyous, and inwardly rich are likely to obtain a very different effect with the right use of the right drugs.

Perhaps most important of all, here, is the idea that intoxication and its ecstasy are essential to the religious reexpression of humanity. Whether caused by chemicals or not,

it is the rael key of religion.

As 666 remarks (N.C.), “Any one who is doing his true Will is drunk with the delight of Life.”

And most important, “this folly against self” is a lie. Self-abnegation is a lie. Who you are is infinitely grand and holy and glorious. Your essence is that of a god, like Dionysus. Celebrate this with your rapture!

AC, in the Old Comment (O.C.), candidly identifies Kundalini as “the central magical force in man.” (Revised slightly 12/15/07 EV)

(v. 89) 23. I am alone: there is no God where I am.
(N.B. 89 = “silence”)

The supreme annunciation of Kether. The second phrase begins with the Pass Word of te 9=2 Grade. Ultimately says the same thing as v. 10. “Allah has no Allah.” (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 90) 24. Behold! these be grave mysteries; for there are also of my friends who be hermits. Now think not to find them in the forest or on the mountain but in beds of purple, caressed by magnificent beasts of women with large limbs and fire and light in their eyes and masses of flaming hair about them; there shall ye find them. Ye shall see them at rule, at victorious armies, at all the joy; and there shall be in them a joy a million times greater than this. Beware lest any force another, King against King. Love one another with burning hearts; on the low men trample in the fierce lust of your pride, in the day of your wrath.

The definition of the Hermits. Yet it may be that these are the Adepti, not the Masters. In any case, the attitude is clear: Their “hermitage” is not induced by living in isolation or outside the raptures of life, but rather from living life to its fullest. If they are “apart from others” it is because they clearly go their own way, live by their own rules. Hadit is Life — He is the flame in the Lamp of the Hermit, and those who bear this Light must be veritable apostles of the living of Life in its fullness. I, who am Frater Yod, and A.L., and L.F., do assert this.

90 is the value of MLK, “king.” It is also Tzaddi, The Emperor. This is a verse of kingship.

Frankly, I like “the forest” and “the mountains,” and it is my way to go there occasionally. But I do not spend my life there.

“beds of purple:” Purple is Kaph here, not Yesod. The Hermits, Yod, are in the company of Kaph and Teth in this symbolism, these being the three Paths attaining to Chesed. And these women are (inwardly, at least) in the image of Babalon. Again, the essence of their experience is vast joy. The closing sentences continue the previous themes,

encourage passionate love of each for his or her fellows, and say in a new way, “Thou hast no right but to do thy will.” (Revised 12/20/07 EV)

(v. 91) 25. Ye are against the people, O my chosen!

“Ye” is plural! The word “chosen” does not apply solely to AC, but to more — presumably to a number of “chosen,” perhaps to all Thelemic “kings.” There is every common sense reason to assume this to be true for each other use of the word “chosen” throughout the Book.

This being determined, the rest of the verse is straightforward. The true individual — and especially the individual of genius — is always against the general populace with their commonplacisms and nigh atavistic views. Public opinion is a tool to be used, but not a damsel to be courted.

In a more important sense, this also posits the initiate as “against” all that is commonplace and servile in himself or herself. (12/20/2007 EV)

(v. 92) 26. I am the secret Serpent coiled about to spring: in my coiling there is joy. If I lift up my head, I and my Nuit are one[.] If I droop down mine head and shoot forth venom, then is rapture of the earth, and I and the earth are one.

Again Hadit is described as the Serpent Kundalini, coiled and ready to spring. According to the Eastern teachings, when this “serpent power” is coiled, it is within the Muladhara chakra, which gives us at least one anatomical site for Hadit.

There is also a specific instruction concerning the distinctive results of this coiled serpent either ascending the spine or being discharged through the genitals in sexual release. There is no indication in the Book that one or the other mode of release is “right” or “wrong,” merely a clear discussion of the differences. This, too, is a commentary on the relationship of the right and averse pentagrams.

See Liber HHH, Cap. III (SSS), for a practical application of this doctrine, suited especially to the Practicus.

I should say also that — if this verse is to be taken as definitive — we should regard only the esexual expression of the “serpent power” as having material consequence, i.e., as magically causing “rapture of earth.” However, the question is slightly more complicated than that. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 93) 27. There is great danger in me; for who doth not understand these runes shall make a great miss. He shall fall down into the pit called Because, and there he shall perish with the dogs of Reason.

“great danger”: This is true at several levels. For one, it would be an error to presume any moral mandate in the two prior verses; they merely indicate a menu of choices.

Also, in a practical sense, there may be “great danger” for one who would ignorantly attempt to unleash this “serpent” — in either direction — without proper discipline and skill.

But beyond this is the fact that these verses have been describing, in more or less accessible terms, a Reality that is superconscious and beyond any reasonable assessment. On the plane of reason, Hadit cannot be understood. Such is the trap of Da’ath, a further name of which is Because. All of this chapter’s seemingly common descriptions of Hadit are but interpolations of a higher Truth into a language not built to house it! Intuition must be used to follow the threads to this Truth.

In fact, the word “runes” discloses that a secret meaning is hidden in the words, only accessible by the trained, the initiated, and the intuitive. It is this I have sought to bring forth; but even then, there is an inherent constraint in one’s ability to give it expression.

“the pit called Because” is the Abyss. The rest is clear enough. If you cannot get past the limits of reason, and into actual spiritual perception, then you are stuck where you are.

This verse likely has an importance far above what it may have on first appearance; for this is the 93rd verse of Liber L. , even as it is the Binah verse of the current set.
(Revised 12/22/07 EV)

(v. 94) 28. Now a curse upon Because and his kin!

(v. 95) 29. May Because be accurséd for ever!

(v. 96) 30. If Will stops and cries Why, invoking Because, then Will stops & does nought

(v. 97) 31. If Power asks why, then is Power weakness.

(v. 98) 32. Also reason is a lie for there is a factor infinite & unknown & all their words are skew-wise.

(v. 99) 33. Enough of Because! Be he damned for a dog!

In a system such as Thelema, it is all but impossible to find a Devil (thank Had!). Devils result from the suppression of acceptability and the fear of a taboo aspect of divinity. (They also come from the dark labeling of a defeated enemy’s gods, so “Christ” comes close to filling the bill for thelemites. AC preempted this disaster by so clearly labeling him a fiction that he would not become quite a bogey man; and by allowing Osiris and the entire solar-cycle theogeny a valid place in the overall scheme of things. Even this Book of the Law cites a role for Isa, i.e., Jesus, in 1:49.

But the one great Thelemic “devil” is Choronzon. This is a devil worthy of the name! Thelemic mothers can tell their children horror stories of him at night that make the blood chill. Though Fra. O.M. confronted him directly, it was only by the gravest necessity; and this great demon is still the night-terror used to snap little adepts into the right way of thinking — uh, make that, of not thinking.

This is pretty impressive in a system that otherwise tolerates anything and everything. It

seems that the dispersion factor of Choronzon and the Abyss runs so contrary to the focus, certainty, and natural precision of the Will that he becomes the Anti-Will, the Gerat Beast 333 which atavistic door-to-door fundamentalist Thelemites can put on the cover of their Enochian Watchtower Magazine in the year 1994 A.L. (3898 EV) in their obsessive resistance to the continued march of the Aeons.

(Have I a sick imagination, or what?)

I suppose my point here is that sometime we have to do something to counter this devilizing trend and, for all of its pragmatic karmic dangers, de-Devilize the old “Demon of the Black Pit of Because.” This is the only real alternative to giving Choronzon a disproportionate handicap on the green.

Which brings me to the word “curse” in v. 28.

“Therefore fear not the Spirits, but be firm and courteous with them; for thou hast no right to despise or revile them; and this too may lead thee astray. Command and banish them, curse them by the Great Names if need be; but neither mock nor revile them, for so assuredly wilt thou be led into error [emphasis added]. — Liber Librae, v. 8

I do not think the attitude of “cursing” the “accursed Because” has been rightly understood. It is purely a technical process. A thing may be censured, bounced, or cast out, the way a lout can be expelled from a fine restaurant, efficiently and dispassionately; and, if done well, it will not disturb too much of the dining experience of the other patrons. A curse is a scourge used in strength, not a shield of avoidance or the buckshot of a scatter gun. Nor must we empower its demonic hold by getting all in a fuss and generating all sorts of projections.

The foregoing applies to all sorts of recalcitrant spirits — as the evocationist should know.

The messages in these verses are predominantly that each thing should be kept on its own plane. Rational argument (an aspect of the Yellow Ray) is incompatible with the purity of Power and Will. It does not fit into magick per se. Choronzon is dispersal and infinite multiplicity and the shadowy phantasms of unchained thought-pathologies that must be healed, must be made whole.

The attack upon reason and “words” is in the Hod verse of the present set. The instruction concerning Power is in the Netzach verse. Verse 99 finishes with the whole subject, and 99 is the value of the transliteration of “because” into Hebrew letters, BHKAVSH.

The verses have other small matters to address. In v. 28, who or what are the kin of Because? Presumably this means “all related mental intrusions.” Verses 30-31 are simply good psychology. Verse 32 also asserts a psychological truism, that Truth lies inviolable in Neshamah, and the intellect is but a tool that attempts — perhaps never

adequately — to mirror it. (Revised 12/15/07 EV)

(v. 100) 34. But ye, o my people, rise up & awake!

Notice how this second chapter of the Book has some substantial differences from Chapter 1, as an evolution, perhaps, from April 8 to April 9. In Chapter 1, it was so easy to read every verse as the words of the HGA. And, although Chapter 2's verses can be read that way as well, they do not leap off the page in the same way.

Additionally, all of Chapter 1 can be read as though its message is intimately and personally for AC; but, by Chapter 2, the instructions are branching out, specifically to embrace vast numbers of others, to carry the word to others; and, by Chapter 3, we will see this trend well established in a practical way.

Here, in the hundredth verse of the Book (the Malkuth verse of the current Yod decanate), Hadit calls to all of "my people" — Hadit's people — to "rise up and awake," to pull their heads out of the abyss of Because and come awake to the higher life.

"rise up": Samekh, the Path unto the K&C of the HGA, literally means, "that which raises up." Also, there is the doctrine of Kundalini. (12/23/07 EV)

(v. 101) 35. Let the rituals be rightly performed with joy & beauty

(v. 102) 36. There are rituals of the elements and feasts of the times.

(v. 103) 37. A feast for the first night of the Prophet and his Bride!

(v. 104) 38. A feast for the three days of the writing of the Book of the Law

(v. 105) 39. A feast for Tahuti and the child of the Prophet — secret, O Prophet!

(v. 106) 40. A feast for the Supreme Ritual, and a feast for the Equinox of the Gods

(v. 107) 41. A feast for fire and a feast for water; a feast for life and a greater feast for death

(v. 108) 42. A feast every day in your hearts in the joy of my rapture.

(v. 109) 43. A feast every night unto Nu, and the pleasure of uttermost delight.

Verses 35 and 44 are instructions on how to approach life. In addition, v. 35 is an important instruction in how the entire religious and magical life is to be approached by those who have responded to the call to "rise up & awake." In the decades since the dictation of this Book, v. 35 has become a worthy standard, even a little commonplace " for which I am personally pleased. This verse is a basic standard of the work of the Temple of Thelema.

Verse 36 defines two types of activity: "rituals of the elements" and "feasts of the times." Are these separate, or do they overlap? On inspection, it appears they are distinct; and 666 apparently believed so, at least in the N.C. period.

The Equinoxes, vernal and autumnal, traditionally have been celebrated as a "ritual of the elements," and continue to be so celebrated by both the A.'.A.'. and the T.'.O.'.T.'. — indeed, by all Orders whose fundamental formula is that of the Neophyte. Additionally,

the T.'O.'T.'. Winter Solstice celebration (The Ceremony of the Return of the Light) is emphatically a “ritual of the elements;” and, near Summer Solstice, another ceremony is annually performed as well....

The “feasts of the times” are those now to be itemized.

Verse 37 (a Binah verse): AC and Rose were married on August 12, 1903 e.v., the birthday of H.P. Blavatsky; and the Book, brought through as a result of the union of the two, declares that this anniversary should be celebrated. A feast is ordained, not a ritual; but a ceremony adoring the Mysteries of Lingam and Yoni would fit well. It would also be consistent with principles of Thelemic couples annually celebrated their own “first night.”

Verse 38 (a Chesed verse): April 8, 9, and 10 of each year. The custom has arisen to read (individually and, perhaps, socially) the appropriate chapter on each respective day, ideally between noon and 1:00 PM.

Verse 39: Should I disclose this secret, even here in my diary? AC’s one-liner is so uncharacteristically withheld as not even to give a subtle hint. I know only what was revealed to me as a result of that day. For those others who read this in the future, I shall only say — perhaps imprudently — that, in this particular verse, “the Prophet” does not distinctly mean AC, nor any single person; and that the secret is discussed indirectly somewhere in a paper issued in the Architect Degree of Temple of Thelema. (105, the verse number with respect to the entire book, is also the value of H.P.K., the notariqon of Hoor-Paar-Kraat; and it gives other significant clues.)

Verse 40 (a Tiphereth verse): The Equinox of the Gods was inaugurated March 20, 1904 e.v., and there should be a festival each year on this date regardless of the date of the actual Vernal (or, in Australia, Autumnal) Equinox. 666, in N.C., holds that the Supreme Ritual is the Invocation of Horus performed by him on 20 March 1904 e.v., and I entirely support him in this determination. 666 issued, in N.C., a specific instruction to celebrate every Equinox “in the manner known to Neophytes of the A.'A.'..”

Verse 41 (a Netzach verse, marking the points of convergence of Nun and Kaph!): The first two are puberty rites for lads and lassies — the social and magical equivalent of a confirmation, or First Eucharist, or Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Birth — and to a lesser extent, birth anniversaries — shall be celebrated as a Feast for Life. Death — and to a lesser extent, death anniversaries — shall be celebrated as a Feast for Death; and the latter shall be the greater of the two.

The custom (in some circles) of calling someone’s death their “greater feast” is repugnant and disgusting. It is one more avoidance of frankly saying “death.” It also misreads the sentence and its implications, and an English speaker’s inability or unwillingness to read and understand basic English composition is offensive. The official terms employed in Temple of Thelema — Feast for Life and Feast for Death — are elegant, beautiful, and stirring. (Crowley, in N.C., uses the term “feast for death,” not

“greater feast.”)

(Another serious problem with the term “greater feast” as used by the aforementioned riffraff of Thelema. “Greater” is a comparative, not a superlative. Used as in v. 41, it correctly contrasts the Feast for Death against one other example, the Feast for Life. But used in isolation, it necessarily states that the person only ever experienced one other “feast” — of any kind — ever! Yet here, in these verses, are listed numerous feasts throughout life — and, in vv. 42-43, every day and every night! Some people just don’t think!)

Verses 42-43: Clear, rapturous, a basis of celebration unlike that of any other religion.
(12/23/07 EV)

(v. 110) 44. Aye! feast! rejoice! there is no dread hereafter. There is the dissolution, and eternal ecstasy in the kisses of Nu.

This concludes the set. Its doctrine is clear, especially as to erroneous ideas of death.
(4/3/95 EV)

(v. 111) 45. There is death for the dogs.

We have just been told that there is no death. Now we learn that, “There is death for the dogs.”

Since there is no death, this cannot refer to the death of any living being. Liber L. uses animals, especially dogs, to refer to the lower aspects of our being, and especially the shadowy and insubstantial reflections which are but poor intimations of the Truth. Dogs are sacred to the Moon, and especially to Hecate. They are, therefore, a proper symbol of illusion and shadow.

It is this — the illusion or shadow, the mere intimation of reality — which dies. The truth endures. Therefore, this verse really says much the same as verse 9.

This is verse 45 of this chapter, alluding to the doctrine that Deus est Homo (45=45). It is also verse 111 of the entire Book, disclosing Aleph and other tokens of eternal life. Its message is clear. What we really are does not die. Perhaps the yapping pet at The Fool’s heels; but not The Fool.

As verse 111, this is also the Kether verse of the twelfth, or Lamed, decanate of verses. These ten verses (from 2:45 through 2:54) are a levied judgment. Read them as such — as a Sephirah-by-Sephirah pronouncement of Lamed’s judgment, with the present verse as the theme sentence of a paragraph — and there will be many fascinating things made evident in the words. (12/25/07 EV)

(v. 112) 46. Dost thou fail? Art thou sorry? Is fear in thine heart?

(v. 113) 47. Where I am these are not.

The Prophet's reaction to v. 45 was apparently sorrowful. "Fail" here means "fall short." It is, thus, identical with "sin." Such "failure" is necessarily associated with fear and grief, which balk the Will. Frater P. is now to be shown that his are mistaken reactions, i.e., that they do not reflect right knowledge of what is so. Furthermore, weakness, sorrow, and fear are emotions that draw one away from the "I am" (Hadit). (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 114) 48. Pity not the fallen! I never knew them. I am not for them. I console not: I hate the consoled & the consoler.

This is the Chesed verse within the Lamed set of verses. It is a commentary on true compassion from the perspective of judgment.

This continues the theme which occupies much of this chapter. An important feature of Hadit's message is the doctrine of strength, the fostering of fitness and eradication of weakness by letting the forms of weakness die off.

This doctrine can never be understood correctly by those to whom these forms are the prevalent reality. A person — persona, personality — is just a casing for the being, the Star, within it. This chapter is spoken from the perspective of Hadit, the essential and unextended Center, and therefore addresses the reality of the spiritual center of each of us.

The utter destruction — de-structuring — of a "person" leaves the Star unharmed. It is immortal, invulnerable. From Hadit's perspective, evolution is fostered by letting failed and fallen forms self-destruct. On that plane of vision, this is the only true compassion.

We begin to run into trouble, however, when we try to bridge the planes and apply this transcendental Wisdom to our workaday lives. To get to the point: Just how are we to treat other people? The final answer is necessarily given in the tetralogism, "Do what thou wilt," especially through the filter of its corollary, "Love under will." Very good. We are to act consistently with the kind of beings we truly are, rather than apply some arbitrary morality; and we are necessarily to act with the realization that we are inherently one with each other.

How does this translate into behavior in the present situation? In other words, what kind of beings are we truly? I think this is the very question that Hadit, the deep center of our common being, is answering for us here. The first step is to realize that no one answer applies in every situation. Ethics are necessarily situational, if all pertinent factors are to be considered in each instance. The second step is to realize that the most complete love for another Star is not always served by supporting or tolerating the structure or form or pattern they have created. This is more popularly seen in the recognition that we can love a person without accepting their behavior. The third step is to realize that, in any case, pity accomplishes nothing. It just wastes your energy and rewards the other person with secondary gain for their failure. Either do something substantial to help, or mind your own business! And if the support given is merely verbal, do not coddle them.

Speak truth. Create a context in which their strength can flourish. But do not accept, encourage, support, or tolerate their continuing a pattern that weakens them. It is far better, given your own nature, simply to leave before doing that!

I repeat: “the fallen” are but shells, the husks of Stars.

“Hate” is the complement of love. Both love and hate are a form of passion. We cannot be separate from that which we truly hate. I must admit that I have always found it difficult to understand hate, and have a similar blind spot with the present verse.

Although I can think of things which, now or in the past, I have severely disliked, or with which I have been severely angry, I have trouble identifying anything I have ever truly hated. I believe hate is an “acquired taste” that must be learned. How can a God of the sublimity and rarity of Hadit hate? The answer must be that He cannot. Such passion cannot be attributed to this “unextended” Point. We must take this in a different sense — not even an “intense dislike” which is still far too human, but, rather, a defining the “hated” object as adverse to (literally, “turned away” from) one’s own nature.

“Consolation” is grossly inconsistent with the nature of Hadit — fiercely so. That is about all this verse can mean. True religion is found in Strength, not weakness.

I guess 666 came to essentially the same conclusion. In N.C., he notes that “falling” is impossible, thus an illusion. The error is in loving hate unreal, in perpetuating falsehood. (4/3/95 EV; expanded 12/23/07 EV)

(v. 115) 49. I am unique & conqueror. I am not of the slaves that perish. Be they damned & dead! Amen. [This is of the 4: there is a fifth who is invisible & therein am I as a babe in an egg.]

This verse continues the theme, then adds a new element. It is the element of Spirit, or Shin as the unifying and central truth within the Maya represented by Tetragrammaton. Here, in this Geburan verse of the Lamed set of verses, Hadit is again the God of Strength and Fitness. The shells die and fade. They are “of the 4,” i.e., of the microcosmic elements; but, “there is a fifth,” Akasha, whose Power is To Go. It is Spirit — “Amen” is a title of Kether — and Hadit is like Harpocrates the Silent within this Akashic egg.

(As AC points out indirectly, this may also read that “Amen” is “of the 4.” AMN = 741 = Sh + M + A + Th, the four elements. 666 suggested, in N.C., that the Pentagonagram is completed by adding Beth to AMN= 93, thus BAMN — which Fra. R.Q.S. would probably abhor!)

It may be, by the way, that this verse number, 49, implies that Rose which is rightly on the Cross thus formed. (4/3/95 EV; tweaked 12/23/07 EV)

(v. 116) 50. Blue am I and gold in the light of my bride: but the red gleam is in my eyes & my spangles are purple & green.

(v. 117) 51. Purple beyond purple: it is the light higher than eyesight. Hadit is describing Himself, particularly in his serpentine form. I take the first part as saying that He is blue and gold when reflecting the blue and gold image of Nuit (vide 1:60). Perhaps, too, this is especially his image in the night. For one who is “unextended,” any color, of course, is impossible; so these verses must be taken even more allegorically than most other things herein. To follow the metaphor, then, we are reminded of his invisibility — his perfect camouflage — in her presence.

But, intrinsically — and perhaps especially “by day” — He is covered with green and purple spangles, and has gleaming red eyes. This is a clear description of his serpentine form. Green and purple remind me of the interior colors most prevalent under very pure LSD. The purple is not chromatic purple, but “Purple beyond purple,” ultra-violet, which is, scientifically, “the light higher than eyesight.” Interestingly, U.V. lamps have come to be called “black light,” and have some interesting properties. If U.V. closes the color wheel, it and green are opposite each other, for green is the mid-color of the visible spectrum. Purple and green per se seem to imply Jupiter and Venus; but I think the “purple” meant here is the color of Spirit. Since vision is attributed to Fire, “higher than eyesight” means “higher than Fire,” or, once more, Spirit (Quintessence). This is, then, a further commentary on the “egg” of verse 49.

AC (O.C.) gives the “Magical Image of Hadit” as “an Eye within a coiled serpent, gleaming red, &c.,” I think that was an undeveloped or immature view, and that the serpent itself — with its own eyes red and gleaming — is a superior idea. (4/3/95 EV; tweaked 12/23/07 EV)

(v. 118) 52. There is a veil: that veil is black. It is the veil of the modest woman; it is the veil of sorrow, & the pall of death: this is none of me. Tear down that lying spectre of the centuries: veil not your vices in virtuous words: these vices are my service; ye do well, & I will reward you here and hereafter.

Throughout this entire Lamed series (vv. 45-54) we have been addressing various aspects of illusion. Hadit having (especially in vv. 50-51) exposed himself as transcendent — infinitely dimensioned, being Zero to the zeroth power — now depicts that particular veil which drapes conventional human reality. It is, again, an illusion, and “none of me.”

It would be an error to specify too painstakingly the nature of this veil. I do not think it can be pinned down precisely. It dominates so much of the reality we normally occupy that language cannot well denominate it. We are specifically told, “it is the veil of sorrow, & the pall of death,” so that it is an expression of duality. It is called, “lying spectre of the centuries.” In brief, it is the manifest shadow of all the joy, life, and strength of light.

I am newly taken, however, with the expression “veil of the modest woman.” I have always previously taken this as referring to coldness, sexual avoidance, the denial of love, &c.; but I now sense a usage more of the flavor found repeatedly in Liber VIII and Liber LXV. This veil is like unto the veil of Isis — even of Nuit Herself! It is this shadow,

this pall, of sorrow, death, and sterility with which a demure GODDESS veils Herself.

Remember the tremendous Islamic influence permeating this Book. In the Arabic culture, in the midst of which AC received this dictation, such veiling was a sign of honor by the woman herself. (This is not to deny the simultaneous significance of sexual suppression and gender suppression; merely to add a concurrent mystical idea.)

But the veil is not the reality which it covers. And, it seems, we are no longer to wait for Isis to part her veil but, rather, tear it down and dare to stare upon Truth. This we can only do because the veil is within ourselves. It is the distance of ourselves from Hadit, our alienation from Truth-of-Self, which veils from us reality. Thus, the “tearing down” is not rape, but rather a clearing of our own vision.

“veil not your vices in virtuous words.” Do not hide the truth of yourself, especially when that truth is an affirmation of life, joy, vitality, and creation.

“these vices are my service.” This is now self-evident. I cannot escape the fact that such “vices” include that mentioned in 2:21 which is characteristic of the Adepts of Thelema.

“ye do well, & I will reward you here and hereafter.” Again, “ye.” All of us. These rewards are surely intrinsic. I especially take the first three words as a present tense statement of fact, not one half of a bargain.

AC’s essay in N.C. is superb! It is the complement and confirmation of what I have written here, and simply excellent social commentary.

Mohammed struck at the root of the insane superstition of tabu with his word: “Women are your field; go in unto them as ye will.” He only struck half the blow. I say: go in unto them as ye will and they will. Two-thirds of modern misery springs from Woman’s sexual dissatisfaction. A dissatisfied woman is a curse to herself and to everybody in her neighbourhood. Women must learn to let themselves enjoy without fear or shame, and both men and women must be trained in the technique of sex. Sex-repression leads to neurosis, and is the cause of social unrest. Ignorance of sexual technique leads to disappointment, even where passion is free and unrestrained. Sex is not everything in life, any more than food is: but until people have got satisfaction of these natural hungers, it is useless to expect them to think of other things. The truth is vital to the statesman, now that women have some direct political power; they will certainly overthrow the Republic unless they obtain full sexual satisfaction. Also, women outnumber men; and one man cannot satisfy a woman unless he be skillful and diligent. The New Aeon will have a foundation of Happy Women: A Woman under Tabu is loathsome to Life, detested by her fellows, and wretched in herself.

(4/3/95 EV; tweaked 12/23/07 EV)

(v. 119) 53. Fear not, o prophet, when these words are said, thou shalt not be sorry.

Thou art emphatically my chosen; and blessed are the eyes that thou shalt look upon with gladness. But I will hide thee in a mask of sorrow: they that see thee shall fear thou art fallen: but I lift thee up.

Apparently, this is direct to Crowley personally. (This Book is, after all, a direct communication to him by his own HGA, however universal its message.) It reassures him that he is one of the chosen, i.e., that he is “of Hadit.” He is told that the inner reality of his life is one of intense rapture, a rapture that will shine through his eyes onto those upon whom he looks with gladness. Yet the outer details of his life shall appear a different thing. Atu XV, the “mask of sorrow,” symbolizes the veiling of the light of the sun by illusion. To the outer he shall appear fallen — shall appear as the Devil! ” but, in truth, he is lifted up (Samekh) by the love of the HGA.

Besides the personal assurances to AC, I believe the important part of this verse is its continuing the teaching of the difference between inner essence and outer form. This “mask of sorrow” is more or less the same as the “veil of sorrow” &c.; of the prior verse. It is a lie. But here, more importantly, it is a mask. Hadit (AC’s own central Self) had every intention that the truth about AC be hidden, obscured, distorted to the outer world. It was essential to the entire mission of AC’s life that “the people” not be able to think of him as fitting their stereotypes of a “holy man.” Otherwise — for example — we would have had just one more example of a religion that deifies the teacher and abrogates the dignity of the devotee. AC is a self-slaying Buddha!

I consider it virtually the first criterion of a serious Thelemic student (I write here in jest, yet not in jest) that you not be able to stand AC the man, and that you feel pretty sure you would not want him as a friend. The second criterion is then an accepting him for what he was an is as a fellow traveler. The third criterion is seeing the whole joke! The fourth is seeing, blessing, and adoring that pure and beautiful Light which is the heart of every aspect of his being and his teaching. Sometimes these stages take time.

“Fear not” is one of the first lessons of all initiation, and is given here especially so that we not be distracted from the golden thread. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 120) 54. Nor shall they who cry aloud their folly that thou meanest nought avail; thou shall reveal it: thou availest: they are the slaves of because: They are not of me. The stops as thou wilt the letters change them not in style or value.

Continues the former verse. Success is assured. AC is particularly fortified against the illusion of his detractors who, however, have no substance to their “folly.” All who would detract from the elegant truth of our Law are (of necessity) alienated from their own Wills, their own Words, their own Truth. How else could they deny it? And without Hadit burning passionately in their hearts, how could they prevail? They are “the slaves of because” in that there is only intellectual form to their folly — all hot air! — and no real spirit.

Then begins a technical note pertaining to the manuscript. The “stops” apparently refer to the punctuation, where great latitude is given in interpretation; but the letters

themselves are not to be altered at all. The message is to stand as originally given, to be encountered anew by each generation, each new student, that they may draw their own wisdom from its undisturbed content.

The “style” is clear; but what of the “value”? More on this emerges in verse 55 which follows, where AC is instructed to “obtain the order & value of the English Alphabet.” This has always been taken to refer to the numerical value, a rule of English gematria. But I note that he is not to “change” the “value;” and in the next verse he is to “obtain... the value.” It already exists, and he is not to mess with it.

There is a deeper level, too. What is the real “value” of “the letters?” Is this quantifiable, or is it on an entirely different (nonnumerical) plane? I feel strongly that there is something very important that we are missing here, that somehow the surface reading of the verse does not deliver to us its real meaning — its, uh, value.

AC believed that, “There is an elaborate cryptographic meaning in this verse.” He keyed it to the words folly, naught, it, and me, and said it required further research. I am sure I do not have it decoded. However, there are fragments that disclose themselves upon inspection. “thou meanest naught” may be read, “thou teachest Nuit,” or the mystery of Zero, which “thou shalt reveal,” i.e., manifest (Cap. I, vv. 1, 5). There is also the strange use of “avail.” As in Cap. I, v. 23, this seems always to have been superficially read as “prevail.” However, there simply is no English language validity to that rendering. As an intransitive verb it means, “to be of use, value, or advantage; to serve.” The literal meaning here is thus that, “they who cry aloud their folly that thou meanest nought” shall be neither of value nor service; but the Beast shall serve, shall be of value.

“They are not of me” could be read, “They are Naught of Naught” (Greek MH = “naught”). (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 121) 55. Thou shalt obtain the order & value of the English Alphabet; thou shalt find new symbols to attribute them unto.

This verse seems to ordain a uniquely English Qabalah. There have been many theories on this, including a couple of my own. I am not thoroughly satisfied with any of it.

Let us analyze the verse carefully to see exactly what we know and what we do not.

Context: The preceding verse (II:54) made reference to the “style” and “value” of “the letters” of this Book. This seems to have stirred a question in AC’s mind about what the “value” might be. This present v. 55 seems to be a brief digression to address that question.

“Thou.” Singular. It seems to refer to AC uniquely, especially in context of the surrounding verse.

“shalt.” Although this could be a command, it could also be a prophecy: “It will happen.” If so, it seems to have been a prophecy failed. (AC’s brief attempt to relate the letters to the trigrams of Liber 27 was later abandoned by him.) In the absence of any clear discovery by him, we certainly are warranted to proceed ourselves, and to seek out this solution.

“obtain.” This is a critical word. The solution is something he did not already have. It is definitely an acquisition. (There is also an obscure and mostly antiquated use of “obtain” to mean “attain to” or “succeed;” this should be kept in mind for future investigation.)

“order & value.” These are the key words of the sentence, and deserve close scrutiny. Only “value” has gotten adequate attention. But let us not miss the fact that AC was told to “obtain the order.... of the English Alphabet”! Now, normally we assume we know the order of the English Alphabet. This in itself suggests very strongly that the order is not the same as that of the normal alphabet.

Now, there is one solution used by AC which is not generally recognized as such. As far as I can tell, he was the first to employ English-Hebraic transliteration and transvaluation. Even if he was not the first, he certainly employed it generously. Calculations such as LOVE = LOVH {Heb.} = 111, or ALONE = ALONH {Heb.} = 156, or LAW = LAV {Heb.} = 37 were not commonplace before AC, and were used readily by him and his close successors.

Such a system (“obtained”) does give hitherto unused values and a hitherto unused order to the English Alphabet. In such a case, the “new symbols” are the new visual interpretations of the Major Arcana of the Tarot.

If this is not the solution, then it appears there is no solution found by AC in his lifetime.

* * * * *

The method of English Qabalah which I personally find most interesting is the English Simplex — simply valuing the 26 letters from 1 to 26 in sequence. It parallels the Latin system, and is the key to Western numerology of the more popular (and adequately proven) kind.

Admittedly, since it uses the natural “order” of the English letters, it would seem not to be that system to which this verse refers. Nonetheless, it produces one startling solution that must be recorded here: The present verse is the 121st verse in The Book of the Law; and, by English Simplex, “order & value” = 60 & 61 = 121!

Could the “new” in “new symbols” be a clue confirming this, since N-E-W are three “5” letters — 5, 14, 23 — down the exact middle of the English enumeration table? Is this a clue to this verse 55?

(A couple of idle observations on this system from a personal perspective: By English Qabalah Simplex, my given civil name has the same value as the Name of my Holy

Guardian Angel. This discovery was made years after the Angel's Name was known. "Temple of Thelema," deliciously, is 156.) (4/3/95 EV; last edited 11/14/2008 EV)

(v. 122) 56. Begone! ye mockers; even though ye laugh in my honour ye shall laugh not long: then when ye are sad know that I have forsaken you.

This now picks up the therad from vv. 53-54, returning from the digression of v. 55.

The message is straightforward. Those who mock these teachings, this word, this law — those who "cry aloud their folly that thou meanest nought" — are cast aside. I should say, rather, that they cast themselves aside. They are not even allowed the trick of laughing their mockery in Hadit's honor; for their laughter is not genuine laughter, not heartfelt joy, but rather a blind and haughty denial of the essential truths of their own hearts. When their false pleasure fades and they discover the emptiness of their truth, they are advised to recognize this as the "forsaking" of Hadit, i.e., of that which is to each his or her Self. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 123) 57. He that is righteous shall be righteous still he that is filthy shall be filthy still.

(v. 124) 58. Yea! deem not of change: ye shall be as ye are & not other. Therefore the kings of the earth shall be Kings for ever: the slaves shall serve. There is none that shall be cast down or lifted up: all is ever as it was. Yet there are masked ones my servants: it may be that yonder beggar is a King. A King may choose his garment as he will: there is no certain test: but a beggar cannot hide his poverty.

(v. 125) 59. Beware therefore! Love all, lest perchance is a King concealed! Say you so? Fool! If he be a King, thou canst not hurt him.

In contrast to many parts of this Book, which are veiled under qabalistic codes and the like, much of Hadit's doctrine is straightforward, no-nonsense. Its only veiling is in any tendency of the mind to distort it because of insufficient understanding, or because of adherence to antiquated moral philosophies.

The present verse — and the next, which accompanies it — are of this variety. The doctrine is so simple, I scarcely know what to say. My mind wanders to the different ways it could be misunderstood. I try to anticipate what someone else would need to hear about it (since these reflections will be shared with others). Yet, where I to respond to those promptings, I would wander all over the place in a misleading essay of excesses.

The very need for this verse in this place is based on an error — the very error I almost now committed.

It is an error that people need codling; but most of all it is an error that one category of people needs special attention in comparison to another.

Why would someone give special treatment to a King? If one considered oneself his

peer, it would be the reciprocal and cofraternal recognition of nobility, noblesse oblige. But I suppose for most people it would be a fear based upon viewing themselves as inferior to the King. Whether out of a desire for boon or a fear of reprisal, one does not want to get caught in a Prince & the Pauper snare if one feels oneself inferior to the King who is veiled. (It is usually only through desire or fear that we open ourselves to the possibility of psychic attack or invasion of any sort.)

In all of the above categories, the essential foolishness is that such inherent rankings exist at all. Each person is who they are, and no simple “lady & the tramp” caste system could be made to work. Something can be learned from everyone and taught to everyone (in theory). Every beggar is a king in his or her own domain (if they but live it), and every king a beggar.

Let me say this differently. Wariness (“Beware”) is not the point. One does not love all because a King may perchance be concealed. One simply loves all. Period. Get the motive right; or, rather, get rid of the motive. Love is the law, the nature of will, and the fundamental fabric of reality — the body of Nuit. It does not need excuses which vainly strive to “lift up” one or “cast down” another.

Having written the foregoing, I turn to AC’s commentary. I note that his O.C. utterly misses the point — since every star is invulnerable in the Light of Hadit. But I am then delighted to see that, in the second paragraph of the N.C., he comes to the same conclusion I have: “We should indeed love all — is not the Law ‘Love under Will’?” He then develops it with a somewhat different emphasis than I have. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 126) 60. Therefore strike hard & low and to hell with them, master!

(v. 127) 61. There is a light before thine eyes o prophet a light undesired, most desirable.

(v. 128) 62. I am uplifted in thine heart and the kisses of the stars rain hard upon thy body.

A strong manifestation of kundalini to the heart level. This is the exact state of worship described in Cap. I, v. 61: the consequence, or result, is the intense impact of the stellar reality of Nuit upon the merely human flesh of AC. This verse is very descriptive of such a powerful kundalini raising of Anahatta and the extreme awakening thereof.

AC cross-references this verse to Liber LXV, and to the imagery of the “heart girl with a serpent.” (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 129) 63. Thou art exhaust in the voluptuous fullness of the inspiration: the expiration is sweeter than death, more rapid and laughterful than a caress of Hell’s own worm. The use of respiratory language focuses this verse. In the state described, the sensuality of the breath becomes rapturous, and is well described here. (Pranayama

can give a hint of this by itself; and it is possible on psychedelics so to open the heart that this becomes a readily verifiable experience.)

Such words as “voluptuous” paint a very sensual picture, and I believe this is the primary level at which these phenomena are best described. It grounds the absurd and almost fanatical language that one would otherwise be tempted to use to describe the immaterial.

Perhaps needless to say, “Hell’s own worm” is not that of the corpse, but of Hadit as kundalini. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 130) 64. Oh! thou art overcome: we are upon thee our delight is all over thee: hail! hail! prophet of Nu prophet of Had prophet of Ra-Hoor-Khu! Now rejoice! now come in our Splendour & rapture! Come in our passionate peace, & write sweet words for the Kings

The fullness of the experience (in this Malkuth verse). The spiritual ordination and coronation of the Priest-King. The Knowledge & Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel under the imagery of the Thelemic pantheon, the Hexagram represented by the union of Nuit and Hadit.

130 is the value of MLK HGAL, “the Angel of Redemption.” It is also the value of OIN, the letter name A’ayin, one of the literal meanings of which is “delight.”

“we are upon thee; our delight is all over thee.” This has to be the most loving and wondrous “gotcha!” in all of literature. Once, and once again, is his transcendent orgasm invoked. Splendor, rapture, and a “passionate peace,” a Pax Profunda.”

His mission: “write sweet words for the Kings.” (This latter probably also means, “Yes, I know this is fun, but don’t get so caught up in it that you forget to keep taking down this Book of the Law that I’m dictating to you.”) (4/3/95 EV)

N.B. 7/5/95 EV. I have conformed this verse to the original manuscript in terms of punctuation, and have also capitalized “Splendour” in accordance therewith.

(v. 131) 65. I am the Master: thou art the Holy Chosen One
Here is the full Knowledge given to AC of Hadit. It continues and climaxes all of the foregoing.

The verse commences “I am.” It is a verse of Kether, the words of the Atma or Yechidah, the voice, in a sense, of the Holy Guardian Angel. (It begins the ten verses attributable to Nun, and these verses, 65-74, are a self-contained thought.)

This is verse 65 of the present chapter, and verse 131 of the entire Book. The Speaker is that One known as ADNI (=65), the HGA. It is also Pan (=131).

Yet the fact that “I and thou” have been differentiated already shows a dropping away from the supreme ecstasy of v. 64.

666, in the N.C., also noted that this is verse 65. He commented, “It seems that He [the HGA] is Hadit [Yechidah or Atman].”

It is in the commentary to this verse, by the way, that 666 remarked, “I have never liked the term ‘higher self’; True Self is more the idea. For each star is the husk of Hadit, unique and conquerer, sublime in His own virtue, independent of hierarchy.” (4/3/95 EV; revised 12/23/07 EV)

(v. 132) 66. Write, & find ecstasy in writing Work & be our bed in working. Thrill with the joy of life & death. Ah! thy death shall be lovely: whoso seeth it shall be glad. Thy death shall be the seal of the promise of our agelong love. Come! lift up thine heart & rejoice! We are one; we are none

(v. 133) 67. Hold! Hold! Bear up in thy rapture fall not in swoon of the excellent kisses
(v. 134) 68. Harder! Hold up thyself! Lift thine head breathe not so deep — die!

(v. 135) 69. Ah! Ah! What do I feel? Is the word exhausted?
The parallel is unmistakable to the stunned reemergence of the Ruach after an extraordinary orgasm. Here it is the mind’s return from samadhi. Even the interpretive faculty is silent. The mind (through the faculty of hearing = Spirit) is opened to perception, to instruction. He wonders if the dictation ended while he was “out.” (AC describes the experience with more detail in N.C.)

See Equinox of the Gods, p. 123: “I think that this was the one passage in the whole book which was not spoken by Aiwaz....” (Revised 7/21/06 EV)

(v. 136) 70. There is help & hope in other spells. Wisdom says: be strong! Then canst thou bear more joy. Be not animal; refine thy rapture! If thou drink, drink by the eight and ninety rules of art: if thou love, exceed by delicacy and if thou do aught joyous, let there be subtlety therein

(v. 137) 71. But exceed! exceed!

Swami Vivekananda repeatedly emphasized — especially in his Bhakti Yoga — that strength is essential to religion. His eloquent insistence on this is surely one of the strong formative influences on Crowley. It is of real importance here.

“Wisdom says...” That is, the instruction is from Chokmah, and especially applies thereto. Let Will be strong and sure, and thus better fit to unite through love with the object of its desire.

Furthermore, uplift your joy to the highest level. Both perfect the technical methods of

obtaining the rapture, and also raise it to include as many planes of consciousness as possible. Apply science and art to your pleasure.

To “exceed” is to excel, to reach past, to transcend prior constraints. Yet this excellence — as any real Epicurean knows — is obtained in subtlety and delicacy as well as by intensity.

The real idea here is to “uplift thyself” — to raise these powerful, pleasurable experiences from the gross to the aesthetic and artistic and unto the spiritually devotional. (This cannot occur, however, unless one inaugurates the current in the first place.)

As 666 summarized: “There is a general instruction to refine pleasure, not by excluding its gross elements, but by emphasizing all elements in equilibrated development. Thus one is to combine the joys of Messalina with those of St. Theresa and Isolde in one single act.”

Why “eight and ninety”? I simply don’t know. My speculations move along the same Tarot lines as those of 666, i.e. royally and majestically, with both control and surrender, &c.; (variations on Tzaddi = Aries = Emperor and Cheth = Cancer = Chariot).

N.B. — The English Simplex system of numeration produces some stunning coincidences in this verse; but I haven’t the slightest idea what, if anything, they mean. First, in investigating the perplexing numeration, I discovered that “EIGHT + NINETY” = $49 + 87 = 136$, the number of this verse! Then — seemingly unrelated to that — at least three separate phrases all enumerate to a common value, one number different; specifically, $135 =$ “Exceed by delicacy,” “Rules of Art,” and “If thou drink.” (2/13/01 EV)

(v. 138) 72. Strive ever to more! and if thou art truly mine — and doubt it not, an if thou art ever joyous! — death is the crown of all.

(v. 139) 73. Ah! Ah! Death! Death! thou shalt long for death. Death is forbidden, o man, unto thee.

(v. 140) 74. The length of thy longing shall be the strength of its glory. He that lives long & desires death much is ever the King among the Kings.

(v. 141) 75. Aye! listen to the numbers & the words

(v. 142) 76. 4 6 3 8 A B K 2 4 A L G M O R 3 Y X 24 89 R P S T O V A L What meaneth this, o prophet? Thou knowest not; nor shalt thou know ever. There cometh one to follow thee: he shall expound it. But remember, o chosen one, to be me; to follow the love of Nu in the star-lit heaven; to look forth upon men, to tell them this glad word. This is surely the best known and most obvious of the Qabalistic puzzles of The Book of the Law. It leaps out at the dullest minds, excites even the least educated and most casual reader.

Although an unequivocal solution, clear to all minds, would be useful, I am not all that sure that we should pay overly much attention to it. I say this, having accidentally — and despite myself — worked out a lucid interpretation around 1980 E.V.

I noted back then, as I note now, that the verse does not say that there is a meaning here; it merely said someone would come along later and “expound it,” i.e., display a meaning that had been “pounded out.” This was certain to happen even in the absence of intentional meaning, even if the verse were pure nonsense. Nor does the “one to follow” refer to Frater Achad, since his discoveries (Liber 31) did nothing at all to “expound” this particular mystery.

Nor is it beyond the HGA to drop in a message because of its certain effect, regardless of its literal truth. This verse certainly drove home the point to AC that there were things about this Book that he himself would not understand.

So — despite having worked this out, for myself, to my own satisfaction — I remain agnostic as to whether there ever was a n intended meaning here.

The really important part of verse 76 is the last sentence. We are given a formula of attainment, and of living, that transcends any qabalistic keys. In three parts, it is:

“...remember... to be me” (i.e., Hadit)

“...to follow the love of Nu in the star-lit heaven”

“...to look forth upon men, to tell them this glad word.”

Nor does it matter particularly that these instructions are, respectively, one for the Hermit, one for the Lover, and one for the Man of Earth. They are to be taken together and applied to the living of live. (Such is one purpose of the instruction in Liber H A D.) (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 143) 77. O be thou proud and mighty among men!

A follow-on to the prior verse. Further instruction in the attitude of living.

Pride is usually listed as one of the “deadly sins.” This is certainly still true of misplaced or overbearing pride; yet pride is not only the qlippothic aspect of the sun, but the vital core of the rightful dignity it bestows on human life.

Pride and might are the attributes of Sol and Mars, respectively. (Both are also traits corresponding to Leo.) They are, therefore, traits of Ra-Hoor in all his aspects.

“among men.” Is this a sexist residual? It is an old phrase, now mostly antiquated, usually assumed to mean, “among people.” Such a usage is very atypical of Liber L. At the present time I regard this as an unfortunate usage of a now antiquated phraseology, which, nonetheless, is perfectly decipherable to us. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 144) 78. Lift up thyself for there is none like unto thee among men or among Gods! Lift up thyself, o my prophet, thy stature shall surpass the stars. They shall worship thy name, foursquare, mystic, wonderful, the number of the man; and the name of thy house 418.

(v. 145) 79. The end of the hiding of Hadit and blessing & worship to the prophet of the lovely Star.

The purpose for which this Chapter was dictated is concluded. Its “end” has been attained. Hadit is fully hidden, i.e., established within the Secret Center which (as was seen in Cap. I) is also the Secret Fire.

This is verse 145 of the entire Book. In the Latin Simplex system, there are three really remarkable correspondences to this final verse concluding the hiding of Hadit. 145 is the value of pars magna secreta, “the most secret part;” sum quod sum, “I am what I am,” synonymous with the Hebrew Eheyeh asher Eheyeh; and Summum Bonum, “the highest good,” a phrase referring to the climax of the Great Work, and especially corresponding to Kether.

Blessing & worship to the Beast, the prophet of the lovely Star! (Revised 4/3/95 EV)

Liber L., Cap. 3
HERU-RA-HA

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34		
35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50		
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66		
67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75									

(v. 146) 1. Abrahadabra; the reward of Ra Hoor Khut.

These five (or seven) words have several simultaneous interlocking meanings.

Chapters I and II opened with identifying (or caption) verses declaring the former to be “the manifestation of Nuit” (“to manifest” = ChVH, “Eve”) and the latter “the hiding of Hadit” (Greek AD = Hebrew ADM). Nuit and Hadit represent the two great complementary polarities of infinity. She “bends down;” He “lifts up” himself. Their union is in the Hexagram, the ensign of love, union, and the fulfillment of the Great Work. All of this is represented by the word “Abrahadabra.”

“Abrahadabra” — as we learned in I:20 (120!) — is “The key of the rituals,” a sobriquet of the Rosy Cross. It would be perfectly correct, I believe, to read this verse as “The Rosy Cross; the reward of Ra Hoor Khut.”

In my meditation on Cap. I, v. 20, I summarized the main meanings of Abrahadabra. It is especially a word of eleven letters which unites the 5 with the 6, the Microcosm with the

Macrocosm, AGAPH with ThELHMA. (“Had” in the midst of 11 letters = Had as the “secret centre” of Nuit.)

In Abrahadabra is the completion and fulfillment of the Great Work. [NOTE: 146 = consummata est, “It is finished,” and SVPh, “end, limit.”] It is especially the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. (Abrahadabra is especially a symbol of the 5=6 equilibration. There is a different Word which reflects the equilibration of 8=3.) The Knowledge & Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel is “the reward of Ra Hoor Khut.” Horus is an exterior image, or “visible object of worship,” of the Holy Guardian Angel, the Child (of the Great Mother and Great Father) who is part of the Magical Image of Tiphereth.

The exact form here — Ra Hoor Khut — is different from the form encountered previously, in Cap. I. For one thing, its numerical value is 10 less, 453. This is also the value of Behemoth (BHMVTh), the great land-monster of Hebrew mythology; and of nephesh chiah (NPhSh ChYH) “breath of life,” a term for the Animal Soul in its fullness, i.e. including the Creative Will (Chiah).

I also suspect that this orthography is intended to point us in a particular direction. The name “Ra-Hoor-Khuit” does not appear, as such, in any of the old Egyptian records; but there are some very similar names, especially Ra-Heru-Khuti or Ra-Heru-Khut. I think the Author of this Book is directing our attention to that particular archetype (even as mine own Angel led me, within the last few days, to review and relearn the material from which the following analysis is drawn).

Heru-Khuti is a very common name in the old writings. It is the Horakhte of which Fagan especially writes, properly translated “Horus of the Horizon.” Heru-Khuti or Horakhte (the Greek Hrumachis) is an especially mighty and wondrous manifestation of the Sun, virtually a Redeemer God. This name usually appears in combination with other names which specify the exact aspect of the Sun which is intended; for example, Tum-Heru-Khuti is the setting Sun.

Ra-Heru-Khuti (or Ra Hoor Khut) is, then, especially the rising Sun, the inner and natural experiences alike which can at once be represented by a Golden Dawn and the Rosy Cross. The newborn Sun, rapturously rising at dawn, is a stupendous emblem of this “reward.” When the “i” is added in the next verse, returning the value to 463, this symbol is again identified with Sushumna. It especially represents the translation of the nephesh chiah (453) into Sushumna (463). Here, in verse 1, the name is more specifically telling us that, in the dawning of this new Aeon of the Child, Hrumachis hath arisen (cf. verse 34).

I also recall Crowley’s observation that “reward” may have a double meaning; i.e. it may mean to “re-ward,” to set the wards again.

Thus, in this great Ritual of the Equinox of the Gods, the knell of the new Utterance hath sounded, the new Hierophant hath been seated upon His throne in the East (“throne”

implies Binah as well; thus, His is a Supernal office of super-consciousness), and the universal temple is now to be re-warded — purified, consecrated, and sealed upon the reception of all the officers into their stations. The dictation (and verily the reading!) of this Third Chapter is a ritual whose guardians are now securely posted so that we may hear the promulgation of the Aeon — so to speak, the Hierophant's lection of the occasion.

Abrahamadabra is this warding, this sealing of the quarters by the interlocking triangles of Fire and Water, and by the Pentagram: 3-5-3 = [Water Triangle / Pentagram / Fire Triangle].

(v. 147) 2. There is division hither homeward; there is a word not known. Spelling is defunct all is not aught[.] Beware! Hold! Raise the spell of Ra-Hoor-Khuit. There is a clean, clear start at the beginning of this new chapter. The first two or three verses are setting up what is to follow. The function of this verse 2 is parallel the function of Chokmah in the Tree of Life, and it commences by declaring a fundamental duality: "There is division."

In this verse, as well, there seem to be multiple simultaneous meanings (although only one primary current, which I shall get to in a bit). For example, "division" reflects that the God of this chapter is a Twin-God. The path of the Twins, Zayin, opens from the Sphere of Tiphereth just acknowledged (in verse 1) unto the Sphere of Binah, "home." Whereas Nuit in Cap. I is the foundation or basis of nihilism, and Hadit in Cap. II of monism, so is Heru-Ra-Ha in Cap. III the foundation of a philosophy of dualism. Within Thelema, all three of these rivers of philosophy coexist, and our Qabalah shows how they are necessarily interrelated and coexistent.

But the primary meaning here, I am sure, is along other lines. "...the pain of division is as nothing, and the joy of dissolution all" (I:30). This verse, this entire chapter, simultaneously displays the Next Step for humanity collectively, and the Next Step for each of us individually. The enthroning of Horus is for the world what the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel is for the individual. Throughout, we will see this parallel, repeatedly and (I think) exactly.

The "division" is the fundamental duality within us each, and especially the separation from the Holy Guardian Angel, the "wound" that is to be healed — the mystery of the Divine Twins in many lands, especially as treated by Jung and Hillman. The pain of this division "is as nothing," yet, "the joy of dissolution" is "all." It is unto the Reality that is Heru-Ra-Ha that the world must turn, that it must embrace; and it is unto the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, "the joy of dissolution," that each must turn. This division is "hither homeward," i.e. between "here" and "home," the final goal (which, perhaps due to equations of "home" and "mother," keeps appearing to me as Binah).

"there is a word not known." Every word of this is pregnant with rich meaning! "there is a word" may mean only "a word exists;" but I believe it means "there is a word." It is

“there,” in or at the state called “home.” (Later: I see that AC agrees that “there” is positional, but he thinks it refers to verse 1. I will stick to my guns on this one, however.) This “word” is a teaching, a doctrine, a key — not, perhaps, literally verbal; in fact (“Spelling is defunct”), I am pretty sure no literal word (i.e. one made up of actual letters) is meant. It is silent Truth, Will in motion. It may be the “word not” (LA), as one of the ubiquitous “31” keys to this Book; but it is clearly “not known.” We do not have “knowledge” of it, in the sexual (union) sense. It is “there,” at “home,” and we have not yet united ourselves with this Logos of our being.

Note also that this is not a “Lost Word.” It would have been the easiest thing for Aiwass to have dictated, “the word is lost.” But this new Word has never yet been found! It is still unknown, unembraced, “undesired, most desirable.”

Again, the doctrine is very explicitly that of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel.

“Spelling is defunct.” At one level, this warns us that we should not play word games in trying to find this “word not known.” But I also agree with AC that the double use of “spelling” and “spell” in this verse is a clue, that the “spelling” which is defunct is the old way of executing spells.

(I must pause briefly in homage. I realize how powerfully AC’s views on these early verses of Cap. III imprinted me some 15 years ago [1979 E.V.]. He believed, probably correctly, that he really did not understand Cap. III; yet his pointers have served me very well in my own understanding. Many of these similarities in opinion I here note come not from consulting his commentaries now, but from the seeds they planted around 1979 E.V.)

“Spelling is defunct.” The old ways of composing letters and words (ideas, themes, forms) is outdated. “Defunct,” as AC suggested, means, “no longer able to function.” New modes of magical working, new formulae, now emerge.

“all is not aught.” I think I will skip this sentence for the rest of this lifetime! The word “aught” has the damnable quality (useful, however, in the metaphysics of Nuit) of meaning both “everything” (all) and “nothing.” In English this sentence either means “All is not all,” or “All is not nothing.” By Qabalah it gets even more confusing, with such equations as $all = 61 = AYN$ (“nothing”), both equal to “aught” in meaning. The problem with this sentence is that it means so much — virtually everything! — that it means nothing at all. (God, I didn’t mean to do that!) Astounding! The sentence itself, by its very character of complex simultaneous meanings, enacts by the process of the sentence the literal meaning(s) of the sentence. Four words. Thirteen letters. A tremendously, marvelously complete and multilevel summation of Chapter I’s doctrine. [NOTE: AC, in the New Comment (N.C.), called this “an excessively neat cipher or hieroglyph of the great key to this Book.”] But why is it here? What has it to do with this verse in this chapter? My guess is that (by its incomprehensibility and simultaneous internal self-contradiction and self-affirmation, if nothing else) it is intended to lift the

mind out of Ruach into Neshamah, expanding on the effect of the immediately proceeding sentence, “Spelling is defunct.”

“Beware,” though expressed as a warning, simply means, “Be wary!” or “Be alert!” Aiwass is hollering, “Heads up!” It is an instruction in attentiveness, concentration, and mindfulness. “Hold” probably refers to self-discipline more than to halting or groping. Together, “Beware! Hold!” are an instruction in the method of yoga.

And the consequence — which is also our “assignment” — is the “raising” of “the spell of Ra-Hoor-Khuit.” Among all its other interlocking meanings, this especially refers to the raising of the kundalini in the attainment of the K&C; of the HGA, pictured in terms of this solar-phallic-Self-GOD (Ra-Hoor-Khu-it).

Ra-Hoor-Khuit (RA-HVVR-KVYT) = 463. This is the value of the Middle Pillar of the Tree of Life (Th = 400, S = 60, G = 3) and of Sushumna (SVShVMNA). This solar-phallic-Self-GOD is the Sushumna, who is our Middle Pillar.

This, then, is the fulfillment — and the uttering of the Word (this verse 2) — of which the redemptive and effulgent rising Sun of verse 1, Ra Hoor Khut, is the seed of promise.

“there is a word not known.” Compare this to the corresponding verse in Cap. II, “Come! all ye, and learn the secret that hath not yet been revealed.” In Cap. I, the corresponding verse is, “The unveiling of the company of heaven.” They are very similar, but with a progressive withdrawal from naked disclosure.

(v. 148) 3. Now let it be first understood that I am a god of War and of Vengeance. I shall deal hardly with them.

This is a very difficult verse. It requires that I address some of the recurrent themes of this chapter, especially that of war. My views on this are complex, because they change with the level of which we are speaking.

First, there is no mistaking the fact that, since 1904, this planet has been bathed in blood as it has not been since fully barbaric days — perhaps not even then, considering the vast population differences. Furthermore, these wars have had a powerful effect on the social, political, and ideological evolution of all cultures. Furthermore, this bloodshed has been triggered, with an amazing reliability, concurrent with the strongest steps of establishing the Law of Thelema in the world.

However, I think it a serious blunder to presume war as a necessary consequence of the energies of Horus. These wars are a result of the failure and weakness of humanity in the birthing of this new Aeon. Perhaps “labor pains” were inevitable, and the tantrums of an unruly child to be expected. Yet infants are usually only unruly in this way if given painful provocation.

The social and spiritual impetus which is Horus demands real change and real

transformation. It is a certainty of the human constitution that if powerful inner forces are ignored or denied, these forces will exteriorize; and, not being consciously nurtured and directed, they will exteriorize in an immature and generally destructive fashion. It is only the ignorance of humanity, its failure to recognize these inner needs and forces, its stubborn and inertial resistance to real change, which has necessitated the pattern we have witnessed thus far — at least until about 1989 e.v.

(The commencement of open temple work by T.'O.'T.' at the Spring Equinox, 1989 e.v., heralded the most extensive redrawing of the world map since at least World War II.)

This, by the way, is what must be true about all the so-called “prophecies” in this Book. Crowley was very excited about such things. To him, they were confirmations of the miracle of the transmission — as if the transmission itself were not miracle enough! However, I must regard them rather as “leaks.” The primary level of interpreting these verses must be in consciousness. Given the archetypal trueness, the same symbols will tend to “distill” into manifestation — that is, to exteriorize — to the extent that they are unfulfilled interiorly. The successful test of this premise is that, if it is true, there will be a tendency to have only negative or (consciously) undesirable prophecies exteriorize; and, in fact, it is primarily in the references to war, sacrifice, and sorrow, the tragedy of the Scarlet Woman, etc., that such outer manifestations of these “prophecies” appeared and were cited by AC. No one is bubbling over about the “good” prophecies being fulfilled. What of the “rich man from the west”? On the outer, everyone is still waiting for the golden shower!

The true warrior spirit blended with a redemptive or healing god must require that the battlefield is within ourselves, and that there is no opponent save ourselves.

In the present verse, it is the inner battle with self that must be our war. Also, in Hebrew characters, “war” is VAR = 207. That is, it is an anagram of AVR, “Light.” Horus is a God of Light, and it is as such that He is to inspire and mobilize us.

“Vengeance” is generally understood to be “the act or motive of punishing another in payment for a wrong or injury he has committed; retribution.” But it also means “with great violence or fury; excessively,” as in, “He acted with a vengeance.” Its root is the Latin vindicare, a most interesting word; for though it comes into English as “vindicate,” its full meaning is, “to lay a legal claim to; to protect, defend; to appropriate; to demand; to avenge, punish.”

* * * * *

I have taken the intervening time since yesterday to examine further my resistance to the most literal interpretation of Ra-Hoor-Khuit as “a god of War and of Vengeance.” It appears the psychological necessity arises from the fact that (a) I feel inwardly deeply connected to the Horus archetype, and yet (b) I could never really accept my God being one of violence and cruelty which are ideas I fully relate to the usual meanings of “War

and Vengeance.” That is one reason I became disillusioned with the Old Testament Jehovah, but could totally accept Krishna’s views on war which, for Arjuna, were perfectly Thelemic.

But I am not sure any usual meaning of “War and Vengeance” is put before us here. Why, for example, are they capitalized? (We are told twice in this Book that the “style of the letters” is important.) These cannot reasonably be the relatively petty human passions that humanity is all too eager to project onto its deities.

So, first: By mythic archetype I recognize that Horus, son of Osiris, was the avenger of his father’s murder.

It is completely clear that the highly energized and martial character of this God (whom I have previously equated with the kundalini and the primal power of the Sun) is to act “excessively” (i.e. “exceedingly;” see diary re: Cap. II, especially verse 71) and “with great fury.” There are no restrained half-measures typical of Him.

Also it is abundantly clear to me that the primary war we have each to wage is within our respective lives, our characters, our personae. That is the actual nature of the Great Work.

Nor shall I ever forget my tour of South-Central Los Angeles — the La Brea and Rodeo area in particular — the morning after the L.A. riots began after the first Rodney King verdict. With doors locked and radio off, I opened myself psychically to feel and enter into the collective reality of the rioting masses as I drove quietly and slowly through the riotous streets of scavengers. There, as the smoke rose (often black and always thick) from the burning buildings, it began to take shape in answer to my inner, stunned “Why?” The smoke rose and congealed massively above one building, into the gray-black form of a huge hawk, and its voice thundered through my being: “The God of Justice is a God of War; and for so great an injustice there must be an equally severe equilibration.” (Or words to that effect; see my diary of the time.)

And therein lies the key. Fear, severity, and brutality are the basest manifestations of Geburah. Its general nature is strength, and its highest manifestation is DYN, din, Justice. For so great an injustice there was demanded an equally great retribution — literally, “paying back” — and especially a compensating equilibration, and equalization of the distributed forces.

This is not the god of some petty human need for revenge, but the great God of Justice. “War and Vengeance,” closely examined, mean Light and Justice, Tiphereth and Geburah — Ra and Hoor.

After the foregoing it seems anticlimactic to attack the concluding sentence of this verse, “I shall deal hardly with them;” but it must be done.

This is an unusual use of “hardly,” though it is correctly employed in an adverbial form.

The common meaning of “scarcely, barely” hardly applies here.

It may also mean “in a hard way,” i.e. “harshly.”

A somewhat antiquated variant usage — which mostly survives as the contemporary word “hardily” — gives the meaning “strenuously.” The Middle English root *hardli* meant “boldly,” i.e. in a hardy fashion. This is the class of meanings that applies here.

What is the antecedent of “them”? I fear we have sloppily, unthinkingly ignored the grammatical integrity to easily accept the word as depicting the Great Vague Them — as in “us vs. them” — perhaps regarding it broadly as the nonspecific and generic enemies of Thelema or some sort of thing. Such ass-blind bigotry is, however, unworthy of a God — nor is it even good grammar!

Since the antecedent is not likely to be “War and Vengeance,” it likely reflects back to verse 2: the division, the ignorance, the “defunct spellings,” and all that is out of whack. These “wrongs,” i.e. “sins” (in the way this Book defines that word), will be dealt with in a strenuous and hardy fashion by the God of Light and of Justice.

(v. 149) 4. Choose ye an island!

(v. 150) 5. Fortify it!

(v. 151) 6. Dung it about with enginery of war

(v. 152) 7. I will give you a war-engine.

(v. 153) 8. With it ye shall smite the peoples and none shall stand before you.

(v. 154) 9. Lurk!Withdraw! Upon them! this is the Law of the Battle of Conquest: thus shall my worship be about my secret house

These six verses form an apparent set. Like much of this Book, and especially like the first three verses of the present chapter, they are subject to simultaneous interpretation on several levels. That is, the essential principles here enunciated may exteriorize to various extents, in diverse areas of life, giving an apparency of multiple meanings.

I believe it is a waste of time for political science majors to scour the headlines for a geopolitical interpretation of these verses. Even if a clear “fit” were to be identified, it would be more or less irrelevant. The real and essential meaning must be the inmost; and any geopolitical consequence would be merely the working out of one particular example of a general principle.

The primary meaning, I believe, is very close to that which Fra. O.M. gave as his “mystical meaning” in the Old Comment (O.C.), to wit:

4. [Choose] one of the Cakkrams or nerve-centers in the spine.

5. Concentrate the mind upon it.

6. Prevent any impressions from reaching it.

7. I will describe a new method of meditation by which —

8. Ye shall easily suppress invading thoughts.

9. May mystically describe this method (e.g. Liber HHH, Section 3).

The deep meaning is a yogic meaning — with several possible variations on a theme. The battle being waged is not of Britain, but is fought within oneself over the integrity and fulfillment of Will.

The “island” may be a chakra, as AC speculated. Even more deeply, being a dry protrusion from a surrounding sea, it is a symbol of Hadit, a point of view within the Great Sea of Nuit. Here is the emergence, or coming forth, of a discrete individual. On a lower plane, it is the formulation of a distinctive ego on similar principles. It basically says, “Determine who you are.”

Translated into life, this also gives practical instruction in getting on. In a particular situation it says to get clear on what you want, what is your point of view or desired outcome or position; and stick to your guns! If it is in accord with True Will, Ra-Hoor-Khuit will fortify you with everything you need to succeed!

“Fortify it!” The ego must be strongly formulated — otherwise, it is a dysfunctional vehicle for the True Will.

The “enginery of war” (which — see verse 3 — especially means “enginery of Light”) is the strength, Light, fortification, power, and all other sources necessary to prosecute the objective. In a major way, we are each the “war-engine” — we are each, with our successive layers or vehicles, complex constructions, “wired” to execute when empowered by adequate energy.

v. 7: Again, “I will give you a LIGHT-engine.” (I also find it curious that 152, the number of this verse with respect to the entire Book, is the value of Concilio Firmata Dei, “Strengthened by God’s Counsel,” the motto of Jeanne d’Arc.)

v. 8: “The peoples” — not “The people” — at first implies a race war. The extra letter is no accident. Still, it clearly represents “the voice of the multitude,” the reactive and invading thoughts and idle thought-formations of which AC spoke. These are the more superficial aspects of our psyches. Our yoga must certainly take us deeper than this!

Ra-Hoor-Khuit — the Holy Guardian Angel — gives all of this help to those who persevere in the way of True Will. His “war-engine” is that inner aid which is best represented by the unfettered majesty of the Sun, before which Sempiternal Splendor the superficial and transient cannot stand.

Verse 9 may indeed describe the method — but it is more likely Liber Turris than Liber H. The “thus” in verse 9 is critical; for it confirms that whatever the preceding verses mean, they are the explication of Ra-Hoor-Khuit’s worship “about [His] secret house.” What is that “secret house” if not the heart, the inner and true Vault of the Adepts, the only true “sovereign sanctuary.” (AC’s New Comment on verse 9 slyly refers to a different “sovereign sanctuary.”)

N.B. Many of the English words in these 6 verses need to be looked up for more precise definitions, including etymological references.

* * * * *

It has been a week and a half since I have worked on the verses of Chapter III of Liber Legis. There is an adjustment taking place. These verses are of an entirely different nature than those of either Cap. I or Cap. II. They are like nothing we have encountered before. And, despite my years of familiarity with this Book, and the particular advantage I might expect from the inner relationship I have forged or found with the Horus archetype, there is no great assistance.

It will, perhaps, be necessary for me to formally invoke Horus for assistance in this. Perhaps the Supreme Ritual will be helpful? [N.B. This was done on the following day, a Tuesday.]

Nuit and Hadit have, so to speak, formulated the two mating triangles; but in Cap. III we encounter Him who is their union in the Sacred Hexagram; and He is immeasurably different than these components. In this archetype of the Holy Guardian Angel there is a distinctive manifestation of one particular illimitable yet unextended aspect of Identity of Self-consciousness (Hadit) experiencing the universe (Nuit); and in doing so, it is both immeasurably limited by its discrete manifestation, and immeasurably empowered to fulfill its distinctive and irreplicable function or destiny.

So much in this Third Chapter seduces its witness to a literal interpretation. Furthermore, AC actualized, that is, materialized, many of these “prophecies” in his own life. Yet, even knowing this, I continue to be inwardly counseled that I am to view every part of this Book primarily at an archetypal level; and that its outward actualizations are to be valued merely as particular cases of a general meaning. Scanning forward, I find that this is difficult to do, in the verses immediately ahead, without feeling forced or artificial. Artifice is the last thing I want to bring to this particular work. It will be necessary for me to progress step by step, verse by verse; and my intellectual powers often will be the least useful of my tools until the point of actually framing what I learn into expressible language. This has frequently been true in the first two chapters; but I suspect it is to be considerably more so now. This path before me has very much the feeling of an initiation; of entering anew the Path of Darkness — the unknown and unguessed, the “undesired and most desirable.” May I walk this Path under the Shadow of the Wings of that One who goest ever before me, bearing the Light even when I know it not.

* * * * *

On November 9 I left off with a note that many of the words in vv. 4-9 need to be looked up in a dictionary, with especial attention to their etymology, to seek subtler meanings than have been hitherto obvious. I do not expect to find much; but historically, this has

often proven quite revelatory.

In verse 4, “island” has the broader and subtler meaning previously suspected. The word is used broadly in English to mean anything completely isolated in the way that an island is isolated. As such, it means any object of meditation whatsoever, and also is a distinctive metaphor of Hadit’s nature. Interestingly, the Indo-European root is akwa- (the Latin aqua) meaning “water.” All objects of attention, as all individual beings, are isolations within an infinite ocean of consciousness, the Qabalistic Great Sea.

The use of “dung” in verse 6 is interesting. If this is a conventional military usage, the dictionary does not reflect it. The word, of course, refers to feces; and its use as a verb means to pack manure around the base of a thing, as to fertilize a plant. (Its old root means “heap.”) From the Egyptian context of the Book’s dictation, we cannot fail to note the metaphor of the dung beetle, divinized as Khephra, God of Resurrection; and even without this metaphor, we certainly are led to see in this verse the employment of “excrement” — old and outworn forms and energies, qliphothic residue, dead and excreted patterns; in short, any of the refuse or “old shit” of our psyches — as protection, sustenance, fortification, and fertilizer for each new reality we are building. The Sword of Horus has come to sweep away the old; but every bit of the old has its use in tending the garden of new growth, the garden of the future. Nothing is lost but old forms; the essence is reconverted to new “plantings,” to new growth.

An “engine” is a special kind of “machine” — from Doric Greek machos, “contrivance or means.” A “machine” is thus something contrived — intentionally devised, as by a human mind — to be the “means” to make something happen. Its basic definition is, “any system, usually of rigid bodies, formed and connected to alter, transmit, and apply directed forces in a predetermined manner to accomplish a specific objective, such as the performance of useful work.” From the de-structed old patterns we are to draw raw resources to build up a new, more functional (and thus “better” structure which will serve our present ends in a far superior way.

An “engine” is a particular kind of machine which translates or converts energy into mechanical motion; or, more broadly, any agent, instrument, or means of accomplishment. Its purpose is accomplishment, movement, action. And, again, it is the result of intentional human contrivance, the use of our minds to formulate it; for the root of “engine” is ingenium.

It is a “war” engine = aur engine; so the raw stuff of which this is being built is L.V.X. (“War” comes from the Indo-European root wers-, meaning “to confuse,” i.e. to create a state of chaos and confusion. This brings the added meanings of a force which disables, for a time, the ordering and orderly function of the intellect; which, like the forces depicted in Atu XVI, The Tower, displaces our rigid control of definition for a time, so that we can actually experience what is before us and create or distill a new and superior Order. This is certainly a good description of the effect of this chapter’s construction on my mind. Biah must guide if we are to Understand.)

This “mechanism of confusion” (or “engine of Light”) is to be aimed at the general populace. The instruction is not only to shake up one’s own reality, but also, and perhaps especially, that of the world. Note that this is not by violence except violence of thought, not letting the comfortable rest in their comfort [NOTE: I am a great believer in the traditional job description of a priest — which I apply to any such spiritual guide — which says that the chief duty is to bring comfort to the discomfited, and discomfort to the comfortable.], but shaking their foundation a little so that they come awake on their own. (An earthquake in California is often termed “nature’s wake-up call.”) The word “stand” in verse 8 means “withstand.”

“Lurk” is to lie in wait, to be still, to be concealed (a meditative method aspiring to Hadit). “Withdraw” is its complement, the pulling out of the concealed; but it also means to retire or isolate oneself. Thus, these two words again describe the basic practice of the yoga of stillness (even as they subtly describe a somewhat more active if esoteric methodology). They are the methods that depict what is really meant by Ra-Hoor-Khuit’s “Battle of Conquest.”

(v. 155) 10. Get the stélé of revealing itself; set it in thy secret temple — and that temple is already aright disposed — & it shall be your Kiblah for ever. It shall not fade, but miraculous colour shall come back to it day after day. Close it in locked glass for a proof to the world.

Throughout the day I have turned my attention many times to the words of this verse and the ones which follow it. In a way that is not true of Chapters I and II, this Chapter III is composed of words called into the service of a direct superconscious Message incapable of verbal expression. The metatext is as important as the literal text; that is, there is as much “message” in the indirect way that the lucidity and illucidity, the rhythm and texture, and other “invisible” characteristics interleave as there is in the actual words. In meditation, the heightened pitch of the superconscious Ideas that are bound into these words rebounds and rings as the clanging of steel on steel, high impact resounding.

Now is the Pillar established in the Void; now is Asi fulfilled of Asar; now is Hoor let down into the Animal Soul of Things like a fiery star that falleth upon the darkness of the earth.

Through the midnight thou art dropt, O my child, my conqueror, my sword-girt captain, O Hoor! and they shall find thee as a black gnarl’d glittering stone, and they shall worship thee. (Liber LXV, Cap. V, vv. 5-6)

On its surface, Cap. III is the most literal of the three; yet if that premise is followed, if the Chapter is held to a literal criterion, then the language balks and escapes. It leads the mind necessarily outside the bounds of any usual use of language, into a meta-language of its own. Yet to discuss it at all, even to record an outline of ideas for my own later reference, I must compel the ideas to incarnate as language, that I may constrain them to this page.

Turning to the words of verse 10, I am again confronted with the need to examine virtually every word, as well as the hidden assumptions behind them. Even in the first sentence is the phrase “stélé of revealing.” From our present position, four score and twelve years into the promulgation of the Law of Thelema, we may easily forget that, prior to this very verse, these words had never been strung together into a name or label.

Now, there appears no question of the allusion. In verse 19 we shall learn for sure that it is stélé 666 from the Boulaq Museum. Also, “stélé of revealing” is not given here as a proper name — it is not capitalized — so it is more descriptive than nominal. Why is this description given? AC never said. It seems so deeply ingrained in him that he never saw the need to explain it.

Did he, for example, see the dictation as an apokalupsis — literally a “revelation” — like that of St. John? His diary of just before the Vernal Equinox in '04 e.v. refers to such a “revelation” coming through. Had this become his way of referring to the time? For the stélé is clearly that of the message of Liber Legis.

To “reveal” is to divulge or disclose, to make known; to bring to view, expose, show, etc. It is the “unveiling” that first appeared in Cap. I, v. 2, where the Body of Nuit — a higher octave of the same idea represented by Isis — is unveiled. Literally its Latin root *revelare* means “to pull back the veil.” By description, a “stélé of revealing” is a stélé of unveiling.

There is, however, a special theological meaning of “revelation” as “a manifestation of divine will or truth.” This seems to be the meaning really intended here.

Here enters also the English Qabalah Simplex; for by this method, revealing = 93. This is the “stélé of 93.” (stélé of revealing = 175.)

Thus far have we come merely identifying what is meant — that is, what may be the relevance — of the object intended.

We are to “get” the stélé and “set it in thy secret temple.” On the surface this seems to be an instruction to obtain a certain item and lock it away someplace. But I have long held — and now feel even more strongly that it is true — that this verse means something entirely different. In the verses preceding, we have been instructed in a process of isolative meditation, even of incarnation. In a practical sense, I believe this present verse means we are to take the image of the stélé and set it within the heart center (or, I suppose, whatever other “island” one has chosen). More deeply, of course, it means to place within the appropriate center the meaning, or inner reality, implied by the stélé.

This “secret temple” — possibly part of the “secret house” of verse 9 — has many more secrets. I was drawn to add up the word “thy” in Anglo-Hebraic script, ThY = 410. I

believe this prompting was solely to alert me to the word for “secret temple,” MShKN, which also enumerates to 410. The phrase “in thy secret temple” is then BMSHKNH = 417; and “in his secret temple” (no stranger a distortion that AC did with Cap. II, v. 78) is BMSHKNV = 418.

The “secret house” of the God is essentially the same as the “secret temple” of the aspirant; and we are told that it “is already aright disposed.”

It is this sacred image, this Eidolon of Thelema, which, kept within the secret temple of an aspirant’s heart (or other “island”) is to be ever that person’s Kiblah, the “direction” he or she turns for regular worship. With perseverance in the practice it is readily discoverable that, “It shall not fade, but miraculous colour shall come back to it day after day.” This is a far greater (and more useful) miracle than “the Trick of the Self-Revivifying Paint Sampler.”

The last sentence of the verse is a puzzle to me. The physical stélé has, of course, been closed in locked glass for years. However, if all the foregoing line of development is correct (as I have been inwardly advised it surely is), then there must be an at least metaphorical meaning here. “Lock” comes from a root leug- meaning “to bend, turn, wind,” hence lock (a strand of hair as much as a security apparatus), luxury, etc.; and it probably comes from the idea of “bending together” or “shutting.”

* * * * *

An examination of the definitions for “glass” produces no new clues except for very unfocused metaphors that the image is to be sealed (“locked”) yet its shield should be transparent (“glass”), and I am exceedingly skeptical of vague rubbish like this.

The Indo-European root of “glass” is ghel-, meaning “to shine.” I am reminded of words in other languages — like the English “clear” — which imply both transparency and lucidity. (Such ideas are closely associated with the Path of Beth; see The 32 Paths of Wisdom.) Derivations of ghel- refer to various colors, and to bright (especially yellow) materials of various types, hence such words as yellow, gull, gall, the Greek chloros (yellow-green; hence chloroform), gold, gleam, glimpse, glimmer, glisten, glass, glaze, glad, glee, glow, gloat, etc.

I must admit that this range of ideas, now laid out, does intrigue me much more with the idea that “glass” refers to a Mercurial idea (“Transparent or Clear Consciousness”). “Locked glass” then, is “fixed Mercury,” i.e. concentrated and firmly held thought. This gives a meaning totally consistent with everything in verses 3-10.

In conclusion, I feel strongly that this verse overall describes a method of worship for all, wherein the most sacred visual image of Thelema, a stélé summarizing the key features of Liber Legis, is held within an interior center (“island” or “secret temple”) such as the heart; the worshipper regularly turns in meditation toward this “Kiblah”; the image, rather than fading, is daily reinforced, becomes more lustrous and vivid, “new colour” returning

to it day after day; and the enclosure of this image in firm and concentrated thought produces the only necessary or real “proof to the world” of Thelema. This “proof” is the way that the teachings infuse and inform the soul of the worshipper, and the consequences thereof. For it is ultimately the God of Silence who is the God of Strength.

I now note that AC, in the N.C., also doubts the literal meaning of this verse. He comments that, “The language is here so obvious and so inane that one is bound to suspect a deeper sense. It sounds as bad as ‘the last winking Virgin’ or St. Janarius.” (2/17/01 EV)

(v. 156) 11. This shall be your only proof. I forbid argument. Conquer! That is enough. I will make easy to you the abstrusion from the ill-ordered house in the Victorious City. Thou shalt thyself convey it with worship, o prophet, though thou likest it not. Thou shalt have danger & trouble. Ra-Hoor-Khu is with thee. Worship me with fire & blood; worship me with swords & with spears. Let the woman be girt with a sword before me: let blood flow to my name. Trample down the Heathen; be upon them, o warrior, I will give you of their flesh to eat

The numerical positioning of this verse in this Book overwhelms almost every other detail, and consumes the structural details of its words in a subsuming and purifying fire.

First, as the sixth verse in the present ten-verse series (vv. 151-160), it is a verse of Tiphereth: “Ra-hoor-Khu is with thee.” The Holy Guardian Angel is here, with you now. Horus is established as the governing spiritual force in the world.

But, beyond that, this is verse 11 of the present chapter, and verse 156 of the entire Book. Eleven is the characteristic number of Nuit; 156 is the value of “Babalon,” the name of “the Victorious Queen” (This numeration appears in either Greek or Hebrew, which is strong evidence, incidentally, that Enochian words must be rightly enumerated either as Greek or as Hebrew.) This verse is, therefore, the manifestation of Nuit in Her aspect as Bbaln, the “secret name which I will give him when at last he knoweth me” (CCXX, 1:22).

The entire verse radiates with the characteristic qualities of Babalon. I know of no verse in the whole of Liber Legis that is so characteristic of the heart of The Vision & the Voice, or of Liber Cheth, or of the classic Babalon communications from the Dee and Kelly source works. (See also the [...] Ceremony of Temple of Thelema.) Her mark — her actual scent — is all over this verse like civet on a cat in heat.

This being said, I am hesitant to peer too deeply into the verse, to try to explain it too concretely. If my perceptions so far are correct, it would require a Master of the Temple 8=3 to Understand it. Normally I would, therefore, content myself with a rational analysis and let the deeper levels evolve in their own time; but for a verse such as this, such rational opinions could be little more than the dung of Choronzon. It is the feeling that must saturate my being here, not the thoughts; and the image presented by

Nesahamah to confront the babbling Ruach is like an impassioned woman who grabs her lover by the collar or throat and, pulling him to her, exclaims, "Shut up and come to me now," then proceeds to explain to him — or, more likely, show him — what she can do.

Having rested a long time in Her embrace, and with my Chiah still worshiping before Her Areopagus (which is that temple of Ares upon a certain hill of Athens), I now record what reason is presently given to know.

"This shall be your only proof." The antecedent is whatever was meant by "proof to the world" in the verse preceding. I believe it to be the result of Thelemic worship, both in terms of inner aspiration and outer living, which are necessarily linked. The true "proof to the world" is the attainment of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel, and its reflection into the other microcosm which is human society, regenerated by the Word Thelema. (Yet this latter transformation can only occur as a consequence of individuals perfecting the former.)

This "only proof" is the "conquering" which "is enough." The conquest is of onself. (The word "Conquer," very martial in style, ultimately means only to be victorious, to win; especially to gain or secure control or dominion.) The word comes from the Latin *conquerere*, "to search for, procure, win," from *quaerere*, "to seek." That is, "conquest" is a quest (cf. "question"), the chief metaphor of the Great Work.

The God of Conquest, however, forbids argument. Thelema is not a proselytizing religion. Verbal and intellectual disputes are specially foreign to the whole idea. Similarly, the real sanctuaries of initiation have traditionally issued manifestos proclaiming who they are, but have never indulged in debate beyond the clarification of their nature and principles, nor proselytized for members.

Even this present "commentary," often couched in the form of rational development of ideas, is not intended to be a debate nor to contend, but merely to trace the paths whereby certain ideas have precipitated into the intellectual plane, and how they can thereby become usefully embodied in words and nurtured in our teachings. It is a record of a particular birth, not a claim to know the only way to build a baby!

Although the Latin *arguere* meant "to make clear, assert, prove," the English cognate is derived through the intermediary of the French *arguer* which means, "to blame!" This is idea that Aiwass forbids through the persona of Ra-Hoor-Khuit.

(v. 157) 12. Sacrifice cattle, little and big: after a child.

(v. 158) 13. But not now.

(v. 159) 14. Ye shall see that hour, o blessed Beast, and thou the Scarlet Concubine of his desire!

(v. 160) 15. Ye shall be sad thereof.

(v. 161) 16. Deem not too eagerly to catch the promises fear not to undergo the curses. Ye even ye know not this meaning all.

In reference to the verses preceding, it means simply, “Don’t even think you know what I’m talking about. Just take it all down like I said, and it will be clear (to someone) in time.”

Aiwass is giving the same advice that found it say into Cap. I of Liber O. In this Third Chapter there are portrayed things both of great horror and of great beauty. We should not, however, ascribe to anything soever the importance it first appears to have.

“Don’t go rushing off toward the good stuff you think is promised! And don’t be all in a panic about this horrible-sounding stuff. Cool out! You’re taking it all wrong, man. You ain’t gettin’ what I’m saying.”

Besides this, there is, of course, the point that, even if we did understand these verses correctly, we should have a certain detachment, giving way neither to fear nor to lust of result.

“...know not this meaning all (AL) is, of course, one of the Frater Achad keys, invoking to LA [Lamed-Aleph, lo] = AL [Aleph-Lamed, el] complement — which veils a secret, or rather a class of secrets, subsequently related to the 7=4 Grade of A.'.A.'. and, by [symbolic] correspondence, to the 7° of Temple of Thelema. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 162) 17. Fear not at all; fear neither men, nor Fates nor gods, nor anything. Money fear not, nor laughter of the folk folly, nor any other power in heaven or upon the earth or under the earth. Nu is your refuge as Hadit your light and I am the strength force vigour, of your arms.

(v. 163) 18. Mercy let be off: damn them who pity! Kill and torture; spare not; be upon them.

The antithesis, on the Tree of Life, of Mercy (Chesed) is Strength or Severity (Geburah). The initial wording is a little strange, but it clearly warrants a Geburan attitude, not that of Chesed.

This verse especially makes clear why we should not “quote scripture” out of context. The verses of this Book are connected and interrelated. The present verse is especially the antidote for the timorous and cowering behavior addressed by the prior verse: Act with Strength! Express your full aggressive vitality!

A fundamentalist reading of this verse would take it as an injunction to “Kill and torture,” and so forth. Although I have no easy explanation for my point of view, I simply renounce this meaning. (On further thought, I see that the explanation for my views is the more fundamental key of Thelema. None of us has the right to infringe another’s will, as by murder.) I suspect layers of meaning I have not tapped. Mostly, I just regard it as an injunction to let loose and ACT rather than brood in your timid closet.

AC, in the O.C., sees this verse as supporting the process of natural selection, and denouncing the artificial protection of the unfit. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 164) 19. That stélé they shall call the Abomination of Desolation count well its name & it shall be to you as 718.

(v. 165) 20. Why? Because of the fall of Because, that he is not there again.
This is verse 165 of the entire Book. 165 = NEMO (Nun Heh Mem A'ayin), a generic name for the Master of the Temple, 8=3. This is an appropriate verse for this number!

This verse especially goes with the preceding verse, and shows the frailty of logical exploration in the face of the elegant mystery of 718; solved eventually not by reason (despite its utterly rational nature) but by a seeming fluke such as startles by its inspiring electricity.

Because (by English Simplex = 56) was previously used in this Book as a variant name of Da'ath.

This present verse is a sublime ridicule of Reason. Even a child knows that the only answer to "Why" is "Because!" And here it is because Because ain't good enough!

"Why" — Vav Heh Yod, by transliteration — is the Trigrammaton spelled qlippothically backwards. That is, it is an observation to the averse aspect of the Divine Name, manifest only to the plane of Yetzirah. [NOTE TO SELF: Develop it, though, also as the Pathway to its real answer — Vav, Heh, Yod as an ascent through the planes, from pure reason (Vav) to Briah (Heh), etc.]

Why is Because a "he"? Why is "he" "not there"? Why "again"? The obvious answer is — Because! (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 166) 21. Set up my image in the East: thou shalt buy thee an image which I will show thee, especial, not unlike the one thou knowest. And it shall be suddenly easy for thee to do this.

(v. 167) 22. The other images group around me to support me: let all be worshipped, for they shall cluster to exalt me. I am the visible object of worship; the others are secret; for the Beast & his Bride are they: and for the winners of the Ordeal x. What is this? Thou shalt know.

(v. 168) 23. For perfume mix meal & honey & thick leavings of red wine: then oil of Abramelin and olive oil, and afterward soften & smooth down with rich fresh blood

(v. 169) 24. The best blood is of the moon, monthly: then the fresh blood of a child, or

dropping from the host of heaven: then of enemies; then of the priest or of the worshippers: last of some beast, no matter what.

(v. 170) 25. This burn: of this make cakes & eat unto me. This hath also another use; let it be laid before me and kept thick with perfumes of your orison: it shall become full of beetles as it were and creeping things sacred unto me.

(v. 171) 26. These slay, naming your enemies & they shall fall before you.
A method of talismanic magick, pure and simple, based on the animal sacrifice of cockroaches — something the whole family can enjoy!

But notice that we should think carefully about who are enemies are — whether they can ever be outside of us the way they are within us. (AC properly references Liber 418, 1st Aethyr, last long paragraph, for the right idea. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 172) 27. Also these shall breed lust & power of lust in you at the eating thereof.

(v. 173) 28. Also ye shall be strong in war.

(v. 174) 29. Moreover, be they long kept, it is better; for they swell with my force. All before me.

(v. 175) 30. My altar is of open brass work: burn thereon in silver or gold.

(v. 176) 31. There cometh a rich man from the West who shall pour his gold upon thee.

(v. 177) 32. From gold forge steel.

(v. 178) 33. Be ready to fly or to smite.

(v. 179) 34. But your holy place shall be untouched throughout the centuries: though with fire and sword it be burnt down & shattered, yet an invisible house there standeth and shall stand until the fall of the Great Equinox when Hrumachis shall arise and the double-wanded one assume my throne and place. Another prophet shall arise and bring fresh fever from the skies another woman shall awake the lust & worship of the Snake another soul of God and beast shall mingle in the globéd priest another sacrifice shall stain the tomb another king shall reign and blessing no longer be poured To the Hawk-headed mystical Lord!

(v. 180) 35. The half of the word of Heru-ra-ha, called Hoor-pa-kraat and Ra-Hoor-Khut.

(v. 181) 36. Then said the prophet unto the God.

(v. 182) 37. I adore thee in the song/ I am the Lord of Thebes, and I/ The inspired forth-speaker of Mentu;/ For me unveils the veiled sky,/ The self-slain Ankh-af-na-khonsu/ Whose words are truth. I invoke, I greet/ Thy presence, O Ra-Hoor-Khuit!

Unity uttermost showed!/ I adore the might of Thy breath,/ Supreme and terrible God,/ Who makest the gods and death/ To tremble before Thee: —/I, I adore thee!

Appear on the throne of Ra!/ Open the ways of the Khu!/ Lighten the ways of the Ka!/ The ways of the Khabs run through/ To stir me or still me!/ Aum! let it fill me!

(v. 183) 38. So that thy light is in me & its red flame is as a sword in my hand to push thy order. There is a secret door that I shall make to establish thy way in all the quarters (these are the adorations, as thou hast written) as it is said:

The light is mine; its rays consume/ Me: I have made a secret door/ Into the House of Ra and Tum,/ Of Khephra and of Ahathoor./ I am thy Theban, O Mentu,/ The prophet Ankh-af-na-khonsu!

By Bes-na-Maut my breast I beat;/ By wise Ta-Nech I weave my spell./ Show thy star-splendour, O Nuit!/ Bid me within thine House to dwell,/ O wingèd snake of light, Hadit!/ Abide with me, Ra-Hoor-Khuit!

(v. 184) 39. All this and a book to say how thou didst come hither and a reproduction of this ink and paper for ever — for in it is the word secret & not only in the English — and thy comment upon this the Book of the Law shall be printed beautifully in red ink and black upon beautiful paper made by hand and to each man and woman that thou meetest, were it but to dine or to drink at them, it is the Law to give. Then they shall chance to abide in this bliss or no it is no odds. Do this quickly

(v. 185) 40. But the work of the comment? That is easy; and Hadit burning in thy heart shall make swift and secure thy pen.

(v. 186) 41. Establish at thy Kaaba a clerkship-house: all must be done well and with business way.

(v. 187) 42. The ordeals thou shalt oversee thyself, save only the blind ones. Refuse none, but thou shalt know & destroy the traitors. I am Ra-Hoor-Khuit and I am powerful to protect my servant. Success is thy proof: argue not: convert not: talk not overmuch. Them that seek to entrap thee, to overthrow thee, them attack without pity or quarter & destroy them utterly. Swift as a trodden serpent turn and strike! Be thou yet deadlier than he! Drag down their souls to awful torment: laugh at their fear: spit upon them!

(v. 188) 43. Let the Scarlet Woman beware! If pity and compassion and tenderness visit her heart if she leave my work to toy with old sweetnesses then shall my vengeance be known. I will slay me her child: I will alienate her heart: I will cast her out from men: as a shrinking and despised harlot shall she crawl through dusk wet streets, and die cold and an-hungered.

(v. 189) 44. But let her raise herself in pride. Let her follow me in my way. Let her work the work of wickedness. Let her kill her heart! Let her be loud and adulterous let her be covered with jewels and rich garments and let her be shameless before all men.

(v. 190) 45. Then will I lift her to pinnacles of power: then will I breed from her a child mightier than all the kings of the earth[.] I will fill her with joy: with my force shall she see

& strike at the worship of Nu: she shall achieve Hadit.

(v. 191) 46. I am the warrior Lord of the Forties: the Eighties cower before me, & are abased[.] I will bring you to victory & joy: I will be at your arms in battle & ye shall delight to slay. Success is your proof; courage is your armour; go on, go on, in my strength & ye shall turn not back for any.

(v. 192) 47. This book shall be translated into all tongues: but always with the original in the writing of the Beast; for in the chance shape of the letters and their position to one another: in these are mysteries that no Beast shall divine. Let him not seek to try: but one cometh after him, whence I say not, who shall discover the Key of it all. Then this line drawn is a key: then this circle squared [graphic] in its failure is a key also. And Abrahadabra. It shall be his child & that strangely. Let him not seek after this; for thereby alone can he fall from it.

(v. 193) 48. Now this mystery of the letters is done, and I want to go on to the holier place.

(v. 194) 49. I am in a secret fourfold word, the blasphemy against all gods of men.

(v. 195) 50. Curse them! Curse them! Curse them!

(v. 196) 51. With my Hawk's head I peck at the eyes of Jesus as he hangs upon the cross

(v. 197) 52. I flap my wings in the face of Mohammed & blind him

(v. 198) 53. With my claws I tear out the flesh of the Indian and the Buddhist Mongol and Din.

(v. 199) 54. Bahlasti! Ompehda! I spit on your crapulous creeds.

(v. 200) 55. Let Mary inviolate be torn upon wheels: for her sake let all chaste women be utterly despised among you.

(v. 201) 56. Also for beauty's sake and love's.

(v. 202) 57. Despise also all cowards; professional soldiers who dare not fight, but play: all fools despise.

(v. 203) 58. But the keen and the proud the royal and the lofty ye are brothers.

(v. 204) 59. As brothers fight ye.

"Brothers," in Hebrew, is AChYM, echiym = 59, the number of this verse.

Our comradeship, or kinship within Thelema, is with "the keen and the proud, the royal and the lofty." This is what we intrinsically are, the standard to which our young aspire. It is among such others — beings of strength and honor and integrity, with the courage to live their lives wholly and by their own sure knowledge of their course — that we belong, that we feel at home. With such as these shall we stand if need be, shoulder to shoulder, facing any common foe to that Life of Liberty, that Light of Love, which we hold so dear. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 205) 60. There is no law beyond Do what thou wilt.

(v. 206) 61. There is an end of the word of the God enthroned in Ra's seat, lightening the girders of the soul.

(v. 207) 62. To Me do ye reverence; to me come ye through tribulation of ordeal, which is bliss.

(v. 208) 63. The fool readeth this Book of the Law, and its comment & he understandeth it not.

(v. 209) 64. Let him come through the first ordeal & it will be to him as silver

(v. 210) 65. through the second gold

(v. 211) 66. through the third, stones of precious water

(v. 212) 67. through the fourth, ultimate sparks of the intimate fire.

(v. 213) 68. Yet to all it shall seem beautiful. Its enemies who say not so, are mere liars.

(v. 214) 69. There is success

So simple. I do not want to spoil it. It promises success of the Book's purposes. As a Word to AC from his own HGA, it is the simple assurance that cuts directly to the core and, coming with the divine Voice, wounds all doubts beyond recovery no matter how much they bitch and moan thereafter.

And it is the same promise to each of us. Discovery your True Will. Do that and nothing else. And there is success.

The promise of success composes the final Chesed verse of the Book. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 215) 70. I am the Hawk-Headed Lord of Silence & of Strength; my nemyss shrouds the night-blue sky.

Aiwass is speaking wholly as though Heru-Ra-Ha. This vast, beautiful, majestic image of the God has always been stunningly clear to me. The verse has always had a powerful effect on me, as do most of those here at the end of all.

It is interesting that his nemyss shrouds, or veils, the Body of Nuit, as if to reiterate that He is the "visible object of worship." Note, though, that Aiwass — nasme beginning with A'ayin — would be expected to have an indigo nemyss.

If indigo is not exactly meant, but rather a kind of bluish "ultra-violet,xxq2 it is then the ambient aura that can be seen, at times with the physical eye, where Heru-Ra-Ha is properly invoked. Heru-Ra-Ha, of course, is both Harpocrates, the Lord of Silence, and Ra-Hoor-Khuit, the Lord of Strength. Furthermore, 215 (the number of this verse with respect to the entire Book) is the value of silentium viresque, "Silence & Strength." 70 is the value of LYL, "night."

This verse is the last Geburah verse of the Book. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 216) 71. Hail! ye twin warriors about the pillars of the world! for your time is nigh at hand.

All of the verses around it appear to be the words of Heru-Ra-Ha. This, though, appears to be directed to the Twin God. Thus taken, it says that the hour is “nigh at hand” of the “twin warriors” RHK and HPK. They are “about the pillars of the world,” i.e., at the threshold, between the pillars of its portal, prepared to enter in and take their ruling place. It is as though Crowley — or even Aiwass, the minister of HPK — suddenly turned to address them.

This is the 216th verse of the Book. 216 is a number very sacred to this god. It is 6 x 6 x 6 (666!), the solidification of sunlight, the entering in of these representatives of the new solar current with manifestation in this world. It is GBVRH, “strength,” and ARYH, “Leo, lion,” thus a perfect glyph of this solar-martial God. And it is more — which I cannot write because it is under an obligation I share with others.

Truly is Heru-Ra-Ha the Twin-God of the sun and of all polarities, “Lord of the Light and of the Darkness.”

This verse 216 is the last Tiphereth chapter of the Book. (Updated 8/21/09 EV)

(v. 217) 72. I am the Lord of the Double Wand of Power the wand of the Force of Coph Nia — but my left hand is empty, for I have crushed an Universe & nought remains.

(v. 218) 73. Paste the sheets from right to left and from top to bottom: then behold! This has been taken, usually, to mean that the 65 pages of the original ms. of Liber Legis are to be so arranged. However, I feel certain this is not what it means.

The “sheets” are not of Liber Legis — Sepher TORA — but of Nuit’s book, Sepher TARO or ROTA (see I:57). The “sheets” are the individual pages or trumps of the Tarot. The correct arrangement is given in Liber Tav, all laid out. This is a tremendously important format for the correct study of the Hebrew letters and the corresponding trumps.

BYHOLD {Heb} = 121 or 11 x 11, a key to Nuit and, perhaps, confirmation that “Her Book” is intended.

This Mystery of the Pages of the Book comprises the last Hod verse of Liber L. (4/3/95 EV)

(v. 219) 74. There is a splendour in my name hidden and glorious, as the sun of

midnight is ever the son

(v. 220) 75. The ending of the words is the Word Abrahadabra.

The Book of the Law is Written and Concealed

Aum. Ha.

Abrahadabra is the completion of the Great Work. It is for this reason that I conclude almost every ritual either by declaring “Abrahadabra!” or by knocking 3-5-3. This is a declaration that all of the work that has gone before, no matter what its form or immediate purpose, is ultimately devoted to the One Work which is the Great Work.

Abrahadabra is the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. It is a formula of samyama.

Abrahadabra, the Word of the Aeon, is the ending of the words, for no other words are needed, all other words are futile, and the faculty of speech is rendered mute.

In this last verse — this Malkuth verse of the Tav segment, wherein all reaches its fulfillment and conclusion — The Book of the Law is written. This is obvious. It is also Concealed, because it is a Book of Concealed Mysteries. These are concealed not because of blinds or obscurities, but because each must discover them for himself or herself.

The first two chapters had the purpose of manifesting Nuit and hiding Hadit. Now the Book itself has, as well, been both manifest and hidden, “Written and Concealed,” with all the same meanings that were given to these words before.

All this is sealed with the words, Aum Ha. Crowley was explicit that this Aum (as all other occurrences in the Book) was to be transliterated Aleph A’ayin Mem. I agree. It thus enumerates to 111. Ha (Heh Aleph) enumerates to 6. These are two of the four great numbers of the Sun, and ha is the Sanskrit word for “sun.” The product is 666, the supreme number of Sol, and a number significant to Crowley. Some would regard it as the signature of the actual author. Aum Ha is as surely the sempiternal Sun as is Shemesh Olam.

Even spelling Aum alternately as Aleph Vav Mem, the whole (AVM HA) is then equal to 53, the value of ChMH, “the Sun,” among other important words.

There is another interpretation I may not share other than with initiates of Temple of Thelema, but have given in Acolyte Explanatory Lecture No. 3. It is based, in part, on a more literal reading of HA [Hebrew]. This alternate interpretation is especially appropriate for this present verse numbered 220. It is roughly synonymous with a certain phrase enumerating to 718, the notariqon of which is X.A.A.

Aum is the first letter of the (devanagari) Sanskrit alphabet, as ha is the name of the last letter. Aum Ha, therefore, is symbolically identical with the Greek Alpha kai Omega, the First and Last.

I note further that aum is a single word composed of three distinct modifications of the breath, even as this Book is composed of three distinct chapters as modifications of one Word. Ha is the one breath that is modified in aum, just as its meanings of Sun and Spirit are the One Radiance which is modified into the three distinctive chapters' messages.

Ha is also the third syllable of the name Heru-Ra-Ha, and has the meanings already discussed. The Book ends on Ha, the solar-spirit breath, and even its last letter, Aleph (the Hebrew cognate of , is the purest, most unconditioned form thereof, the Silence or Zero into which the Word of Aiwass withdraws.

The first two letters of the Book, as the last two, are thus "Ha." To put it differently, the entire Book is contained between the letters H-a. Similarly, the Pentateuch is all contained between its first letter, Beth, and its last letter, Lamed, spelling LB, "heart;" so it is said that the whole of the Five Books of Moses (that earlier "Book of the Law," or Sepher ha-Torah) are contained within the heart (and within 32, the number of "Paths of Wisdom" in the Hebrew system). Similarly, we can say that the whole Book of the Law is contained in the Spirit (HA), and that the nature of that Spirit is solar (HA, "Sun" = 6). Yet HA is also the spelling of the letter Heh in Atziluth; therefore, 6 must be seen as the Mystic Number of Binah, the sum of 1-3, and Ha represents The Star and the all-embracing Mother on the highest spiritual plane. (11/9/03 EV)

<http://www.aumha.org/arcane/enoch.htm>

109 captures

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About this capture

ENOCHIAN

ELEMENTAL TABLETS

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Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

From this page you can access the Elemental Tablets of the Enochian system. These versions are based on the Tabula Recensa given by Raphael on Monday, April 20, 1587. These are the final and definitive versions of the tablets.

These tablets are sacred objects, and have enormous power. They are not to be regarded or treated lightly.

These tablets will appear in English characters unless you have an Enochian font on your computer. You can download an Enochian TrueType font [here](#) or Mac font [here](#). (I

believe this font is in the public domain. I retrieved it from an Internet site now long forgotten by me. If I have erred in this interpretation, I invite the rights-holder to please contact me and I will correct this.)

Earth Tablet
Air Tablet
Water Tablet
Fire Tablet
The Tablet of Union

OTHER TABLETS

Also available here are seven other Magick Tablets of a planetary nature. These are not Enochian in derivation, but are modern in origin, based on my own personal work; and are based on related formulae that were commonly employed during the era when John Dee received the Enochian system. You are welcome to view them and work with them as you see fit.

These tablets are given in the Hebrew alphabet. They are designed to work with the Hebrew font that I have found most generally useful over the years. Without this font, the tablets are pretty worthless, and are border-line unreadable. Unfortunately, this font is part of a commercial product and under a copyright owned by Galaxie Software. I have attempted to locate Galaxie Software, and they appear to be out of business. I have, therefore, elected to make the font available for download in TTF format here and as a Mac font here. Should Galaxie Software still exist and object, I will, of course, remove it, even though I suspect that its distribution in the present environment would constitute fair use for non-profit educational purposes.

Should you, nonetheless, wish to access the Planetary Tablets, here they are:

Tablet of Saturn
Tablet of Sol
Tablet of Mars
Tablet of Jupiter
Tablet of Venus
Tablet of Luna
Tablet of Mercury

Love is the law, love under will.
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Love is the law, love under will.

<http://www.thelema.org/aa/>

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C.O.T. Lamén

A.'.A.'.

Introduction

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A.'.A.'.

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

A.'.A.'. is the one true and invisible Order which has operated under various names and guises throughout history to guide the spiritual evolution of humanity. The goals of the A.'.A.'. are those which have motivated spiritual exploration and religious inquiry throughout human history. Its methods are those of science; its aims are those of religion.

It is the Arcanum Arcanorum, and the Holy of Holies wherein the Sacred Ark rests inviolate. Every legitimate magical order, mystery school, religion, or other agency disseminating some portion of Wisdom or Light is or has been but an Outer Vehicle of this Inner Fellowship of Light. "All words are sacred and all prophets true; save only that they understand a little..." (Liber Legis, I:56).

This is the highest and purest meaning of A.'.A.'..

More commonly, however, we use the name A.'.A.'. to mean not only this Invisible and Eternal Order, but a particular outer structure, or terrestrial incarnation of the Interior School, which came into being, beginning in 1906 C.E., at the hands of two Adepts named Aleister Crowley and George Cecil Jones. This Order survives today through various authentic lineages which can be traced back to these two Adepts.

LINEAGES OF THE A.'.A.'.

Since the death of Aleister Crowley in 1947 there have been no universal Chiefs of the A.'.A.'. Karl Germer (S.'.H.'. Frater Saturnus, 8=3), was the senior living A.'.A.'. member at Crowley's death, and many turned to him for guidance; but he never took up the mantle of governance of the Order. After Germer's death, no single person emerged visibly as a central guiding figure.

Yet the Order itself has continued, according to its original plan whereby a member of sufficient Grade may admit others to the chain.

Various lineages have survived. Claims are periodically encountered that one individual or another is an authentic link to A.'.A.'. Some of these claims are quite real; some are honest mistakes; and some are fraudulent. It is not our present purpose to play arbiter to these claims, to upraise one or knock down another. It is a universal truth of Initiation that each student, at each step along the way, gets the teacher he or she "deserves," based on the real maturity and needs of the soul; and that while sometimes spiritual growth is fostered by finding the BEST teacher, at other times it is best fostered by lessons of discrimination taught in the School of Hard Knocks.

In this matter we give but one sage piece of advice: "By their fruits shall ye know them!" The Works of the Adept, the fruits of his or her garden, are the signs of his or her attainment.

ADMISSION AS A PROBATIONER

From its beginning, the A.'.A.'. philosophy supported the admission of any interested person soever into the instruction and practice of Scientific Illuminism. In other words — in the earliest years — anyone at all could write to the A.'.A.'. and request an interview with a Neophyte who (all things proceeding agreeably to the applicant) would admit the individual as a Probationer (0=0 Grade) forthwith.

Unfortunately, this complete "open door" policy resulted in a very high percentage of failures. By early 1912 it was found necessary to make a change in the admission requirements. It was thus ordered "that every person wishing to become a Probationer of A.'.A.'. must first pass three months as a Student of the Mysteries." A specific study and testing curriculum was established for this Student period.

However, although Aleister Crowley inaugurated this Studentship in 1912, and gave examination in it as late as 1945 (about two and a half years before his death), there is little evidence that he paid much attention to it, in that form, during the intervening 33 years. Instead, he tried numerous ways of preparing people to undertake the Probationer Grade of A.'.A.'. He moved from one approach to the next, apparently adapting each to the needs of a particular student as best he could.

Many years ago, this same approach was adopted by the Soror Estai lineage. While each applicant is required to pass through a formal Student period, many avenues are accepted for accomplishing this. (For clarity, we should mention that beginning with

Probationer, the administration of the A.'.A.'. Grades is strictly by the criteria established by Aleister Crowley and George Cecil Jones. It is only in the Student, or preparatory, stage that such broad variation is practiced.)

Any sincere aspirant seeking to affiliate with the A.'.A.'. as a Probationer may write:

Cancellarius, A.'.A.'.

Seal of the A.'.A.'.

Love is the law, love under will.

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Fraternity of the Hidden Light

Updates - NEW BOOK

"Esoteric Secrets of Meditation and Magic" The sequel to the bestseller "Occult Fundamentals and Spiritual Unfoldment" by Paul Foster Case...
FLO Publications Page

Declaratio Lucis

To serve the Limitless Light and travel the Path of Return for its own sake; To labor at the Great Work and become a conscious assistant of Evolution on all levels; To unveil the Mysteries of Nature that one's service will be guided by Truth; To awaken... [more](#)

New in Our Archives

Exclusively republished in our "Hidden Light" journal in 2000, "The Secret Doctrine of Tarot", is an early esoteric analysis of Tarot by Dr. Paul Foster Case which first appeared in Azoth Magazine. [more](#)

Tarot Reflections

A new article on Tarot in the Development of the Initiate: What the Tarot is, is unique, complex, cyclic, a complete revelation of Power, Love, and Wisdom. It unfolds at the Heart of the Cube of Space with its roots... [more](#)

Our Mission Statement

One of the Primary Purposes of the Fraternity of the Hidden Light is to prepare its members for illumination so that they may serve humanity. Members progress through several grades of instruction and experience, which aid them in achieving all that they are capable of becoming. The common goal is illumination and the full expression of wisdom, love and power... [more](#)

The Threshold Course

A Guide to Initiation

The Threshold Course is an opportunity for you to take a conscious step toward your own evolution as a spiritual being! Based upon the principles of Wisdom, Love and Power, this course is designed to give the student a well-rounded introduction into the mysteries of the Ageless Wisdom. This is both a theoretical and experiential curriculum... [more](#)

Jachin

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Real Audio Lectures from The Gnostic Society

Genesis and Gnosis

Ecclesia Gnostica

The Gnostic Society -- Lecture Schedule

The Gnosis Archive, www.gnosis.org, offers a vast collection of primary texts and resources relating to Gnosticism and the Gnostic Tradition, both ancient and modern. This public service site is maintained by Lance Owens , to whom you may address any comments or suggestions.

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The Gnosis Archive is referenced by the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and Encarta

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THE GNOSIS ARCHIVE

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Meditations

Take a moment to reflect on a brief meditation and reading from the Gnostic scriptures, selected from this week's Gnostic liturgy. Meditate upon the feminine aspect of divinity with meditation and readings from this month's Sophia liturgy. Now available on audio as the GnosCast-Meditations pod cast via iTunes or RSS

The Gnostic Society Library

Visit the Gnostic Society Library, a comprehensive library of Gnostic scriptures -- including the Nag Hammadi Library -- as well as a large selection of writings and documents relating to the study of Gnosticism. For over a decade, the Gnostic Society Library has been the principal internet resource on Gnostic tradition. Also check the Gnostic Society Bookstore featuring the best current works on Gnosis and Gnosticism.

New in the collection: See the online video lecture, below, introducing C.G. Jung and his mysterious Red Book. We have also edited and updated our library copy of Jung's Seven Sermons to the Dead (*Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*). Also recently added to our audio collection is an acclaimed series of lectures, J.R.R. Tolkien: An Imaginative Life. These lectures discuss the relationship of Jung and Tolkien and their imaginative experience. The lectures are available on line in illustrated format, or for download as mp3 audio files.

Updated in the Library - The Secret Book of John: Among the several dozen ancient Gnostic manuscripts rediscovered in modern times, the Secret Book of John (also known as the Apocryphon of John) is widely considered to be the most important. It is the preeminent "Gnostic Gospel", a sacred reservoir for the defining essence of Gnostic myth and revelation. Recognizing the importance of this text, we have now added a large section to the Library dedicated to the Secret Book of John -- included in collection you will find introductory materials and several translations of the Secret Book of John, including Prof. Stevan Davies' excellent new "reader's edition". If you are interested in reading a "Gnostic Gospel", this is a good place to start.

We have added a huge digital collection of the works of G. R. S. Mead. Mead was perhaps the most important early scholar of Gnosticism and his writings remain an invaluable resource. This collection contains twelve volumes of Mead's works, several essays from *The Theosophical Review*, and a bookstore offering of Mead's works in print.

Publication of C. G Jung's Red Book

The Red Book - C.G. Jung This is the extraordinary event many of us have awaited for decades, and its importance cannot be overstated.

During WWI, Jung commenced an extended self-exploration that he called his "confrontation with the unconscious." During this period, he developed his principal theories of the collective unconscious, the archetypes, psychological types and the process of individuation, and transformed psychotherapy from a practice concerned with the treatment of pathology into a means for reconnection with the soul and the recovery of meaning in life. At the heart of this endeavor was his legendary Red Book, a large, leather bound, illuminated volume that he created between 1914 and 1930, and which contained the nucleus of his later works. While Jung considered the Red Book, or *Liber Novus* (New Book) to be the central work in his oeuvre, it has remained unpublished till this day, and unavailable for study and unseen by the public at large. The work can be

best described as a work of psychology in a literary and prophetic form. It is possibly the most influential unpublished work in the history of psychology. Its publication is a watershed that inaugurates a new era in the understanding of Jung's life and work.

As Jung stated: "The years ... when I pursued the inner images were the most important time of my life. Everything else is to be derived from this. It began at that time, and the later details hardly matter anymore. My entire life consisted in elaborating what had burst forth from the unconscious and flooded me like an enigmatic stream and threatened to break me. That was the stuff and material for more than only one life.... Everything later was merely the outer classification, The Gnostic Jung the scientific elaboration, and the integration into life. But the numinous beginning, which contained everything, was then."

Amazon.com is now taking orders. The anticipated publication and release date is October 7, 2009. Order Now.

Septem Sermones ad Mortuos

While Jung considered the Red Book to be the central work, there is another text from this period of equal importance: the Septem Sermones ad Mortuos (Seven Sermons to the Dead). Written around 1916, the Septem Sermones are Jung's earliest formulation of his visionary experience. Unlike the Red Book which remained hidden and unpublished, Jung privately printed the Septem Sermones around 1919. When examining the imaginative work of Jung, it is essential to examine the Septem Sermones ad Mortuos in context of, and along with, the great Red Book. These are together the two crucial primary documents of Jung's "confrontation with the unconscious". (The Seven Sermones to the Dead are available here in our Library.)

In 1982, Stephan A. Hoeller published the first critical study of Jung's Red Book writings, giving a compelling Gnostic hermeneutic to the only then-published fragment from this material, Jung's Septem Sermones ad Mortuos. This ground-breaking study, *The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead*, still stands as a crucial introduction to Jung's visionary experience; it is highly recommended to those preparing to explore the Red Book. Buy the Book.

The New York Times Magazine (September 20, 2009 edition) offered a very interesting article about Jung and the Red Book online: *The Holy Grail of the Unconscious*.

Online Video lecture by Dr Stephan Hoeller on "C.G. Jung and the Red Book" Video Lecture on Red Book

On June 6, 2009, Dr. Stephan Hoeller presented a lecture to the C.G. Jung Club of Orange County discussing the important and mysterious circumstances surrounding the coming forth of Jung's Red Book . The lecture was professionally recorded and is now available for on-line viewing.

This lecture is approximately 90 minutes in length; for convenience it is divided into three 30 minute segments. A complete DVD of the lecture can be purchased from BC Recordings, where you will also find an expansive catalog of Dr. Hoeller's many audio lectures on C.G.Jung and Jungian psychology.

Click to view the lecture. (You will need the Quicktime plugin installed in your browser.)

Recent Additions to the Bookstore

The Gnostic, first issue of a new tri-annual journal dedicated to "Gnosticism in all its forms". Featuring interviews with Alan Moore and Sethian Gnostic expert John Turner; a complete translation of the Gospel of Judas; Tim Freke on The Gospel of the Second Coming; articles on William Burroughs, Philip K.Dick, the Alternative Judas, Gnosticism and Magic; columns, book reviews and more.

This is the second major effort in recent decades to produce a regularly published journal dedicated to Gnostic studies. The first, Gnosis Magazine, began publication in 1985 and continued successfully with regular quarterly issues for fourteen years (back issues are still available for sale). Since the demise a decade ago of Gnosis Magazine no one has attempted a regular journal dedicated to the scope of Gnosticism in its modern resurgence.

We found the first issue of this new effort very promising and offer the publishers our best wishes for success. Give it a reading! No subscriptions are presently offered; it is being sold on a per-issue basis. Buy at Amazon.com

The Nag Hammadi Library, edited by James Robinson
The Nag Hammadi Scriptures, edited by Marvin Meyer, introduction by Elaine Pagels
The epochal new translation of the entire Nag Hammadi library has finally arrived! Dr. Marvin Meyer has done a masterful job in producing a volume that will serve for many decades as the standard source. Scholarly understanding of the Gnostic texts found at Nag Hammadi has vastly matured since their original publication as the Nag Hammadi Library in 1977. This new edition fully reflects that refinement in "the scholarly ear" for both the forgotten ancient tongue and the spiritual tradition preserved in the Gnostic Coptic texts. In every possible way, publication of The Nag Hammadi Scriptures represents a milestone in modern understanding of Gnostic tradition. Elaine Pagels, the author and professor who introduced a generation of readers to the Gnostic Gospels, appropriately pens the introduction to this landmark edition. Every student of Gnosticism will want to own this book, but before jumping into the big volume, we still highly recommend a study of some of the briefer introductory readings listed in the Bookstore.

The Gnostic Gospels of Jesus, edited by Marvin Meyer

The Gnostic Gospels of Jesus, edited by Marvin Meyer, is our top recommendation for readers beginning their exploration of the Gnostic scriptures. Over the last three decades Prof. Meyer has distinguished himself as a singularly talented translator and commentator on Gnostic traditions. In this new collection -- the best of several that he has now published -- Meyer presents twelve key Gnostic "gospels" in succinct, accurate and highly readable new translations. The book's subtitle claims it to be: "The definitive collection of mystical gospels and secret books about Jesus of Nazareth". Though perhaps not "definitive", we agree this is the best introductory collection available.

Meyer states his goal in these translations is to be "as accurate as possible" while still presenting the texts in "felicitous English." At this he succeeds beautifully. Readers who have labored with the sometimes tortured translations and editorial conventions presented in the original editions of the Nag Hammadi Library published thirty years ago will be amazed at the graceful intelligibility of Meyer's translations. Meyer adds to the collection an overview of our evolving understanding of Christian Gnosticism, and prefaces each of the selected text with an excellent introductory essay.

Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing

There has long been need for a comprehensive introductory guide to Gnostic tradition. We are happy to announce the arrival of just such a book: Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing by Stephan A. Hoeller, published by Quest Books. Visit the Gnostic Society Bookstore for more information.

Also Featured:

Reading Judas, by Pagels & King
Reading Judas: The Gospel of Judas and the Shaping of Christianity by Elaine Pagels and Karen L. King
Under management of the National Geographic Society, the discovery and publication of The Gospel of Judas received a great deal of publicity. Putting aside the sometimes over-bearing "hype", this is indeed an important addition to our library of early Gnostic Christian texts. Elaine Pagels and Karen King, two of the foremost scholars of Gnostic literature, have now "jumped on the bandwagon" and here offer their own very insightful introduction to the Gospel of Judas, placing the text firmly in the context of early Christianity. If you have read any of Pagels' other works you will immediately recognize the lucid and informative style of this short little book. Visit the Gnostic Society Bookstore for more information and our review.

Listen to an audio interview with Dr Pagels and Dr. King hosted by NPR's Terry Gross.

The Gospel of Mary of Magdala, by Karen King

The Gospel of Mary Magdalene is one the most surprising and delightful of the rediscovered Gnostic texts. This excellent new print edition of the Gospel of Mary of

Magdala by the widely respected scholar Karen King is the best authoritative edition available. It incorporates translations of the Coptic Gospel of Mary found in 1896 in Cairo, along with the two small Greek fragments of the text found at Oxyrhynchus. Included is a superb introduction along with extensive commentary on the text and its implications for modern understandings of early Christianity. Highly Recommended. Visit the Gnostic Society Bookstore for more information.

Wisdom of the GnosticsWisdom of the Gnostics - An Introduction to Gnosticism. A ten lecture audio course (nine hours of listening) by Dr. Stephan Hoeller is now available in the Bookstore and from the BC Recordings online store for purchase or immediate download. This is the quintessential introduction to Gnostics, Gnosis and Gnosticism. Included here are introductory lectures on the nature of Gnosticism and discussions of central Gnostic scriptures, including the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Philip. Mary Magdalene, the Prophet Mani, the medieval Cathar Gnostic renaissance, and the Templar myth are all covered in this superb course.

What is Gnosticism?

Many visitors to the Archive have requested some basic introductory material explaining Gnosticism. To meet this need we offer these "places to start": two short articles, The Gnostic World View: A Brief Summary of Gnosticism and What is a Gnostic?; and two audio lecture on Gnosticism and its Legacy and the Gnostic concept of Christ: The Misunderstood Redeemer. For more in-depth reading suggestions visit the Gnostic Society Bookstore -- you will find offered there a selection of the best introductory and advanced books on Gnosticism, along with brief reviews of recommended books. And of course just "surfing" The Gnosis Archive will lead to a wealth of information. Blessings on your journey!

The Gnostic Viewpoint: Essays on Contemporary Gnosticism

The Gnostic Viewpoint section offers a series of short articles examining Gnosis from a modern perspective selected from past volumes of Gnosis: A Journal of Western Inner Experience. These essays offer an excellent introduction to the wide scope of modern Gnostic interests. A sample of some of the titles: Valentinus: A Gnostic for All Seasons -- What is a Gnostic? -- The Gnosis of the Eucharist -- Hermes and Hermeticism Throughout the Ages -- and many others.

Genesis and Gnosis

The popular PBS television special "Genesis: A Living Conversation", hosted by Bill Moyers, directed wide attention to the many interpretations of the Book of Genesis. One of the vital readings of Genesis -- the Gnostic reading -- was, however, completely ignored. Explore this balancing perspective in The Genesis Factor, an essay by Dr. Stephan Hoeller.

Lectures from the Gnostic Society

For twenty-five years Bryan Campbell (a professional Hollywood recording engineer)

has been archiving recordings of Dr. Hoeller's weekly lectures. A huge selection from this collection is now available by for immediate online download and for shipping in CD albums. Visit our Web Lecture page for more information.

Current free Web Lectures (available at BC Recordings):

Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing

Dr. Hoeller introduces the subject of his latest book of the same title. An excellent brief introduction to the Gnostic Tradition. (This lecture introduces not only our 10-lecture album "The Wisdom of the Gnostics", but all of our recordings on Gnosticism by Stephan A. Hoeller) Running Time 47:25.

The Greatest Treasures of Nag Hammadi

"Thomas and Philip: Gospels of the Gnostic Christ" is a free, full-length presentation introducing the ten part set of lectures on the most popular and valued writings from the Nag Hammadi Library, the Gnostic writings found in Egypt in 1945. Running Time 79:52.

An Introduction to The Gospel of Judas

Dr. Hoeller regards "The Gospel of Judas" as an important and very Gnostic document, and gives his preliminary evaluation in this brief talk. A series in four parts on the "Gospel of Judas" was delivered Summer 2006, and is available in disk and in download formats. Running Time 39:11

Altered States Ancient and Modern

Aids to consciousness have so much history it takes 13 titles in this set to cover this controversial subject. This brief lecture lays a foundation for a Gnostic understanding of this topic. Running Time 53:01.

Tolkien and "The Lord of the Rings"

Gnosis and Creativity merged in this great work by J.R.R. Tolkien. A 7 part set on it is introduced by this brief presentation. Running Time 74:04.

The Battle about God: Where do Gnostics stand?

Christopher Hitchens' "God is Not Great" and Richard Dawkins' "The God Delusion", Mother Theresa's Doubts and the timeless Gnostic answers to the issues they raise in this full-length presentation. Running time 80:08.

We also offer two lecture series presented Dr. Lance Owens:

J.R.R. Tolkien: An Imaginative Life. This series of the three lectures examines the broad span of Tolkien's life and work, with special focus on Tolkien's experience of his imaginative gift. The lectures are available on line in illustrated format, or for download as mp3 audio files.

C. G. Jung: Portrait of a Twentieth-Century Wizard. Dr. Lance Owens (from the Wasatch Gnostic Society in Salt Lake City) explores the Archetype of the Wizard in this the first of four retrospectives on the life work of C. G. Jung. Go to the Wasatch Gnostic Society page for more information on this series. These lectures are available in both RealPlayer and MP3 format.

The Gnosis Archive Search Index

You can search the entire Gnosis Archive for keywords, scriptural phrases, and subjects using our advanced search functions. The Archive contains well over a thousand documents specific to Gnostic studies, including translations all the classical Gnostic scriptures and patristic documents relevant to early Gnostic movements. The search function on the Archive is a major resource for students and researchers.

Gnostic Studies on the Web

This section contains a wide selection of current Sites and Documents dealing with Gnosticism, ancient and modern, available on the Web.

Ecclesia Gnostica

A selection of thoughts and writings from the Ecclesia Gnostica, as well as a schedule of services for the parishes in Los Angeles, Portland and Salt Lake City.

The Gnostic Society

The Gnosis Archive is maintained in association with The Gnostic Society. Visit for more information, including the current "Friday Lecture Series" schedule.

There is now also a Gnostic Society branch in Seattle, Portland and in Salt Lake City! Visit The Gnostic Society of Seattle, The Portland Gnostic Society, or The Wasatch Gnostic Society (in SLC) for information on their upcoming local events. If you are in Europe, you may wish to contact the Oslo Gnostic Center about current activities.

The Studio

The Studio offers an evolving "online gallery" for art and Gnosis. Our current show in The Studio presents a series of pencil, pen, and watercolor images evoked by personal dreams and visions: Images by Jacquelyn Owens.

If you have a completed show that you would like to submit for consideration, please contact us.

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The Golden Dawn

Library Project

The Golden Dawn Library project is a collective effort to see the entire corpus of materials deriving from the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a fraternal, magical order of the 19th century through to the present day, available online. This library will contain as many Golden Dawn and Golden Dawn derived documents as can be found. These documents will be keyed in by volunteers who wish to see these materials available.

Currently, a transcription of the original Cipher Manuscript, the foundation document, is available along with gif format images of its pages.

The Cipher Manuscript

Whare Ra Pentagram Ritual

Tarot Cards

The Neophyte Ritual

The Golden Dawn FAQ, December 1999, version 6.0

Whare Ra Papers

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The Golden Dawn FAQ, December 1999, version 6.0

Where Ra Papers

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The Cipher Manuscript

The Key

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Neophyte Ritual of the Golden Dawn

On the Dais (The Stage in the East of the Temple)

Imperator. Cancellarius. Praemonstrator. Past Hierophant.

These officers represent the Second Order and are present mostly symbolically.

Required Materials

For the Altar:

Cross and Triangle
Red Rose
Red Lamp
Cup of Wine
Paten of Bread and Salt

For the Candidate:

Black Gown
Red Shoes
Hoodwink
Rope
Sash
Chemicals to change clear water to red -- the color of blood.

OPENING OF THE NEOPHYTE GRADE 0=0

When the members are assembled and clothed, Hierophant gives one knock and the Officers rise.

Members do not rise except for Adorations to the East or when asked for the signs. Nor do they circumambulate with the Officers. When they do have occasion to move in the Temple, they do so in the direction of the Sun and make the Neophyte signs on passing the Throne of the East -- whether the Hierophant is there or not. The Grade sign is made in the direction of movement except when entering or leaving the Hall, when it is made toward the East.

The knock is made by rapping the base or shaft of Wand or the pommel of Sword on a Table.

Hiero: (Knock) (All members assembled wearing regalia. Kerux goes to the right of Hierophant, faces West and proclaims:)

Kerux: HEKAS, HEKAS, ESTE BEBELOI! (Returns to place.)

Hiero: (Knock) Fratres and Sorores of the Order of the Golden Dawn in the Outer, assist me to open the Hall of the Neophytes of the (Name the) Temple (All rise.) Frater Kerux see that the Temple is properly guarded.

Kerux: (Knock) (Answered by Sentinel) Very Honored Hierophant, the Hall is properly guarded.

Hiero: Very Honored Hieres, assure yourself that all present have witnessed the Golden Dawn.

Hiereus: Fratres and Sorores of the Order of the Golden Dawn in the Outer give the signs of a Neophyte (done). Very Honored Hierophant (saluting) all present have been so honored.

Hiero: Very Honored Hiereus, how many chief officers are there in this grade?

Hiereus: Three, Very Honored Hierophant. Namely, the Hierophant, Hiereus and Hegemon.

Hiero: Is there any peculiarity in these names?

Hiereus: They all commence with the letter H.

Hiero: Of what is this letter the symbol?

Hiereus: Of life, because the character H is one Mode of representing the ancient Greek aspirate; Breathing and Breath, are the evidence of life.

Hiero: How many assistant officers are there in this grade?

Hiereus: Three, besides the Sentinel, namely, the Kerux, the Stolistes, and Dadouchos.

Hiero: The situation of the Sentinel?

Hiereus: Without the Portal of the Hall.

Hiero: His duty?

Hiereus: Armed with a sword to keep out intruders, and to prepare the Candidate.

Hiero: Frater Dadouchos, your situation?

Dad: In the South, Very Honored Hierophant, to symbolize heat and dryness.

Hiero: Your duty?

Dad: I attend to the censer and the incense, and I assist in the purification and consecration by Fire of the Hall, of the Members, and of the Candidate.

Hiero: Frater Stolistes, your situation?

Stol: In the North, Very Honored Hierophant, to symbolize cold and moisture.

Hiero: Your duty?

Stol: I see that the robes, collars and insignia of the Officers are ready before the opening; I attend to the cup of lustral water and I assist in the purification and consecration by water, of the Hall, of the Members, and of the Candidate.

Hiero: Frater Kerux, your situation?

Kerux: Within the Portal of the Hall, Very Honored Hierophant.

Hiero: Your duty?

Kerux: I see that all the furniture of the Hall is properly arranged before the opening. I guard the inner side of the Portal. I admit Fratres and Sorores of the Order. I assist in the reception of the Candidates. I attend to the Lamp of my office. I lead the mystic circumambulation and make all announcements and reports.

Hiero: What do your Lamp and Wand symbolize?

Kerux: The Light of Occult Science and directing power.

Hiero: Honored Hegemon, your station?

Heg: Between the two pillars of Hermes and Solomon facing the cubical altar of the Universe, Very Honored Hierophant.

Hiero: Your duty?

Heg: I preside over the symbolic gateway of Occult Science. I am the reconciler between light and darkness. I immediately follow the Kerux in the mystic circumambulations. I superintend the preparation of the Candidate; lead him through the path of darkness into light, and assist in his reception, and I aid the other officers in the execution of their duties.

Hiero: What does the white color of your robe symbolize?

Heg: Purity.

Hiero: Your peculiar ensign of office?

Heg: The mitre-headed scepter.

Hiero: What does it symbolize?

Heg: Religion, to guide and regulate life.

Hiero: What does your office symbolize?

Heg: Those higher aspirations of the soul, which should guide its actions.

Hiero: Honored Hiereus, your station?

Hiereus: On the throne of the West, Very Honored Hierophant.

Hiero: What does the throne of the West symbolize?

Hiereus: Increase of darkness; decrease of light.

Hiero: Your duty?

Hiereus: I preside over twilight and darkness, which encompass us in the absence of the Sun of Life and Light. I guard the gate of the West. I assist in the reception of the Candidate and I superintend the inferior officers in the execution of their duties.

Hiero: What does the black color of your robe symbolize?

Hiereus: Darkness.

Hiero: Your peculiar insignia of office?

Hiereus: The Sword and Banner of the West.

Hiero: What does the Banner of the West symbolize?

Hiereus: Twilight.

Hiero: What does the Sword symbolize?

Hiereus: Severity and Judgment.

Hiero: What does your office symbolize?

Hiereus: Fortitude.

Hiero: My place is on the Throne of the East, which symbolizes the rise of the Sun of Life and Light -- my duty is to rule and govern this Hall in accordance with the laws of the Order. The red color of my robe symbolizes Light: my insignia are the Scepter and the Banner of the East, which signify power and light, mercy and wisdom, and my office is that of Expounder of the Mysteries. Frater Stolistes, I command you to purify the Hall and the members by Water.

Stol: (Does so, saying) I consecrate with water.

Hiero: Frater Dadouchos, I command you to purify the Hall and the members by fire.

Dad: (Does so, saying) I consecrate with fire.

Heg: (Goes to the North and faces East.)

Hiero: (Rising with Scepter and Banner) Let the mystic circumambulation take place in the path of light. (Done in due form; Kerux first, then Hegemon, Hiererus, other members and Stolistes and Dadouchos last. They pass three times around from East by South to West. After first round Hiererus returns to his place. After second round Hegemon, after third remaining members. Each as he passes the throne of the East salutes and lowers insignia, except the Hierophant.)

Hiero: The mystic circumambulation symbolic of the rise of the Light is accomplished. Let us adore the Lord of the Universe.

(ADORATION)

Holy art Thou, Lord of the Universe.
Holy art Thou, whom Nature hath not formed.
Holy art Thou, The Vast and Mighty One.
Lord of the Light and of the Darkness.

(All Salute.) Frater Kerux, in the name of the Lord of the Universe, I command you to declare that I have opened the Hall of the Neophytes.

Kerux: (Going to the right of the Hierophant as usual) In the name of the Lord of the Universe, I declare that the Sun hath arisen, and that the Light shineth in the Darkness.

Kerux: (Knock)

Hiererus: (Knock)

Heg: (Knock)

(All resume their seats.)

Hiero: (Knock) KHABS.

Hiererus: (Knock) AM.

Heg: (Knock) PEKHT.

Hiererus: (Knock) KONX.

Heg: (Knock) OM.

Hiero: (Knock) PAX.

Heg: (Knock) LIGHT.

Hiero: (Knock) IN.

Hiereus: (Knock) EXTENSION.

CEREMONY OF ADMISSION

(The Candidate is not to be told the name of the Order until his admission.)

Hiero: (Knocks) Fratres and Sorores of the Order of the Golden Dawn in the Outer, I have received a dispensation from the Greatly Honored Chiefs of the Second Order to admit (name of aspirant) to the Grade of Neophyte. Honored Hegemon instruct (name of aspirant) to hold himself (or herself) in readiness for the ceremony of his (or her) admission and superintend his (or her) preparation. (Hegemon removes his chair from between the Pillars, salutes Hierophant, quits Temple and prepares Candidate as follows: The Candidate is Hoodwinked and a rope tied thrice around the waist.)

Heg: Child of Earth, arise and enter the Path of Darkness.

Kerux: (Knocks) Very Honored Hierophant, is it your pleasure that the Candidate be admitted?

Hiero: It is. Admit (name of aspirant) in due form, who will hereafter be known by the motto XYZ. Fratres Stolistes and Dadouchos assist the Kerux in the reception. (They join Kerux at door. Kerux opens door but bars the entrance.)

Kerux: Child of Earth, unpurified and unconsecrated thou canst not enter our Sacred Hall.

Stol: (Signing a Cross on Candidate's forehead) Child of Earth, I purify thee with Water.

Dad: (Censing the Candidate) Child of Earth, I consecrate thee with Fire.

Hiero: Conduct the Candidate to the foot of the altar. Child of Earth, why dost thou request admission into this Order?

Cand: (Prompted by Hegemon) My soul is wandering in darkness seeking for the Light of Occult Knowledge, and I believe that in this Order the knowledge of that Light may be obtained.

Hiero: (Name of aspirant) I hold in my hand your signed pledge to keep secret all relating to this Order, but to confirm it I now ask if you are willing in the presence of this assembly to take a great and solemn obligation to keep inviolate the secrets and mysteries of our Order? Let me however assure you that this obligation contains nothing

incompatible with your civil, moral or religious duties.

Cand: I am. (Banners left behind at Thrones. Hierophant advances between Pillars to Eastern side of Altar. Hieres stands on Candidate's left, Hegemon on Candidate's right.)

Hiero: Thou wilt kneel on both knees, give me your right hand, which I place on this sacred and sublime symbol (Places Candidate's right hand on the center of the triangle.) Place your left hand in mine, bow your head, repeat your full name at length and say after me (All rise).

THE OBLIGATION

I, (name of aspirant), in the presence of the Lord of the Universe and of this Hall of Neophytes of the Order of The Golden Dawn in the Outer, regularly assembled under warrant from the Greatly Honored Chiefs of the Second Order, do of my own free will and accord hereby and hereon most solemnly pledge myself to keep secret this Order, its name, the name of its members, and the proceedings which take place at its meetings, from all and every person in the whole world who is outside the pale of the Order, and not even to discuss these with initiates, unless he or they are in possession of the password for the time being; nor yet with any member who has resigned, demitted or been expelled, and I undertake to maintain a kind and benevolent relation with all the Fratres and Sorores of the Order.

I furthermore promise and swear that I will keep any information relative to this Order, which may have become known to me prior to the completion of the Ceremony of my admission and I also pledge myself to divulge nothing whatsoever concerning this Order to the outside world in case either of my resignation, demission or expulsion therefrom, after the completion of my admission. I will not seek to obtain any ritual or lecture pertaining to the Order without due authorization from the Praemonstrator of my Temple, nor will I possess any ritual or lecture unless it be properly registered and labeled by him.

I further undertake that any such ritual or lecture and any case, cover or box containing them shall bear the official label of the Golden Dawn. I will not copy myself, nor lend to any other person to be copied, any ritual or lecture, until and unless I hold the written permission of the Praemonstrator to do so, lest our secret knowledge be revealed through my neglect or error.

Furthermore, I undertake to prosecute with zeal the study of Occult Sciences, seeing that this Order is not established for the benefit of those who desire only a superficial knowledge thereof. I will not suffer myself to be hypnotized, or mesmerized, nor will I place myself in such a passive state that any uninitiated person, power, or being may cause me to lose control of my thoughts, words or actions.

Neither will I use my Occult powers for any evil purposes and I further promise to

persevere with firmness and courage through the ceremony of my admission, and these points I generally and severally, upon this sacred and sublime symbol, swear to observe without evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation of any kind whatsoever; under the no less penalty on the violation of any or either of them of being expelled from this Order, as a willfully perjured wretch, void of all moral worth, and unfit for the society of all right and true persons, and in addition under the awful penalty of voluntarily submitting myself to a deadly and hostile current of will set in motion by the chiefs of the Order, by which I should fall slain and paralyzed without visible weapon as if slain by the lightning flash. (Hiereus here suddenly lays the blade of his sword on the nape of the Candidate's neck and withdraws it again).

So help me the Lord of the Universe and my own higher soul.

Hiero: Rise, newly obligated Neophyte of the Golden Dawn in the Outer. Place the Candidate in the Northern part of the Hall, the place of the greatest symbolic darkness. (Done. Candidate faces to the East, Hierophant and Hiereus return to their thrones.)

Hiero: The voice of my higher soul said unto me, Let me enter the Path of Darkness, peradventure thus shall I obtain the Light. I am the only being in an abyss of darkness. From the darkness came I forth ere my birth, from the silence of a primal sleep, and the Voice of Ages answered unto my soul, I am he that formulates in darkness. Child of Earth; the Light shineth in the darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not.

Let the mystic circumambulation take place in the path of darkness with the symbolic Light of Occult Science to guide the way. (Kerux leads with Light and Wand, Hegemon guides the Candidate, Stolistes and Dadouchos follow, thrice round. First time Hierophant (Knocks), and Hiereus (Knocks), Second time Hierophant (Knocks) They halt in the South.)

Kerux: Child of Earth, unpurified and unconsecrated, thou canst not enter the path of the West.

Stol: (Signing a Cross on Candidate's forehead) Child of Earth, I-purify thee with water.

Dad: (Censing Candidate) Child of Earth, I consecrate thee with fire.

Heg: Child of Earth, twice consecrated, thou mayest approach the gate of the West. (They move to the West, facing Throne and halt. Hiereus rises, takes Banner in left hand, menaces Candidate with sword and says as the Hegemon slips up the Candidate's hoodwink.)

Hiereus: Thou canst not pass by me saith the Guardian of the West unless thou canst tell me my name.

Heg: Darkness is thy name, the Great One of the Paths of the Shades.

Hiereus: (Slowly sinking point of sword) Child of Earth, fear is failure. Therefore be without fear, for in the heart of the coward virtue abideth not. Thou hast known me, so pass thou on. (Hoodwink slipped down again. They move to the North and halt.)

Kerux: Child of Earth, unpurified and unconsecrated, thou canst not enter the Path of the East.

Stol: (Signing a Cross on the Candidate's forehead) Child of Earth, I purify thee with water.

Dad: (Censing the Candidate) Child of Earth, I consecrate thee with fire.

Heg: Child of Earth, thrice consecrated, thou mayest approach the gate of the East. (They move to the East facing Throne and halt. Hierophant rises, takes Banner in left hand and raises Scepter as if to strike. Hegemon slips up Candidate's hoodwink.)

Hiero: Thou canst not pass by me saith the Guardian of the East, unless thou canst tell me my name.

Heg: LIGHT dawning in darkness is thy name, the LIGHT of a Golden Day.

Hiero: (Slowly lowering Scepter) Child of Earth, remember that- unbalanced force is evil, unbalanced mercy is but weakness, unbalanced severity is but oppression. Thou hast known me, so pass thou on unto the Cubical Altar of the Universe. (Hoodwink slipped down and Candidate taken to West of Altar. Hierophant leaves Throne and stands between the pillars, facing Candidate with Scepter in right hand and Banner in left.)

Hiero: I come in the Power of the Light.

I come in the Light of Wisdom.

I come in the Mercy of the Light.

The Light hath Healing in its Wings.

(Hegemon on Candidate's right, Kerux behind Candidate, Stolistes and Dadouchos right and left of Kerux. The officers are now forming a Hexagram around the Altar. Hierus holds sword in the right hand with the Banner of the West in left.)

Hiero: Let the Candidate kneel while I invoke the Lord of the Universe (Candidate kneels). Lord of the Universe, the Vast and the Mighty One, Ruler of the Light and of the Darkness, we adore Thee and we invoke Thee. Look with favor upon this Neophyte, who now kneeleth before Thee and grant Thine aid unto the higher aspirations of his soul, so that he may prove a true and faithful Frater among us unto the Glory of Thy Ineffable Name. Amen.

Let the Candidate rise. (Candidate is assisted to rise and is brought close to the Altar. Hierophant, Hiereus, and Hegemon raise Wands and Sword touching over the head of Candidate. At the word "Darkness" Kerux removes hoodwink).

Hegemon: Inheritor of a dying world we call thee to the living beauty.

Hiereus: Wanderer in the wild darkness we call thee to the gentle light. (Hoodwink removed).

Hiero: Child of Earth, long hast thou dwelt in darkness. Quit the night and seek the day. (All members present clap hands. Hierophant, Hiereus, Hegemon say together):

Hiero: Hiereus: Heg: (Said together) Frater XYZ we receive thee into the Order of the Golden Dawn.

Hiero: (Knocks) KHABS.

Hiereus: (Knocks) AM.

Heg: (Knocks) PEKHT.

Hiereus: (Knocks) KONX.

Heg: (Knocks) OM.

Hiero: (Knocks) PAX.

Heg: (Knocks) LIGHT

Hiero: (Knocks) IN.

Hiereus: (Knocks) EXTENSION.

Hiero: In all your wanderings through darkness the lamp of the (Kerux advances and raises his lamp) Kerux went before you, though you saw it not. It is the symbol of the Hidden Light of Occult Science. Let the Candidate be conducted to the East of the Altar. Honored Hiereus, I delegate to you the duty of entrusting the Candidate with the secret signs, grip, grand word and present password of the Neophyte Grade of the Order of the Golden Dawn in the Outer, of placing him between the mystic pillars and of superintending his fourth and final consecration. (Hierophant returns to Throne, Hiereus takes his place between the pillars, Candidate is conducted by Hegemon to the East of the Altar facing Hiereus. Hiereus giving Sword and Banner to Hegemon to hold.)

Hiereus: Frater XYZ, I now proceed to instruct you in the secret signs, grip and token, grand word and password for the present time for this Grade. Firstly, advance your left foot about six inches: this is called the step of the grade. The sign is two-fold; the

Saluting Sign and Sign of Silence. The first should always be answered by the second. The Saluting Sign is given by thrusting both arms horizontally forward, palms downwards, as if groping your way and bow your head. It alludes to your condition in a state of darkness unilluminated by the Lamp of Occult Knowledge and groping your way blindly in the search for truth. The Sign of Silence is given by placing the left first finger on the mouth. It alludes to the strict silence inculcated on you by your obligation regarding all proceedings of the Order. The grip or token is given in the following manner: Advance your left foot about six inches touching mine, side to side and toe to heel. Now extend your right hand as if to grip mine, but miss it intentionally; again extend it and seize mine by the fingers only. It alludes to the seeking for guidance in darkness. The Grand Word is HAR-PAR-KRAT whispered by alternate syllables mouth to ear thus. It is the title of the Egyptian God of Silence and should ever remind you of the strict silence you have sworn to maintain. The password is (blank) which will be periodically changed at each Equinox so that a member who has resigned, demitted or been expelled from the Order, may be in ignorance of the existing password. I now place you between the two pillars of Hermes and Solomon in the symbolical Gateway of Occult Science. (Hierus draws Candidate forward between the pillars and unclasps hands. He receives sword and banner from Hegemon, stands at the latter's left, all facing Candidate.)

Hierus: Let the final consecration of the Candidate take place.

Kerux: (Goes to the North and faces East. Stolistes signs a Cross on Candidate's forehead, bows to Hierophant and sprinkles East and says): Frater XYZ, I purify thee finally with water.

Dad: (Censing as Stolistes has done) Frater XYZ, I consecrate thee finally with fire.

Hiero: Honored Hegemon, the final consecration of the Candidate having been performed, I command you to remove the rope from his waist, the last remaining symbol of the path of darkness, and to invest him with the distinguishing badge of the grade.

Heg: (Doing so) By the command of the Very Honored Hierophant, I invest you with the distinguishing badge of the grade. It symbolizes Light dawning in darkness.

Hiero: Let the mystic circumambulation take place in the path of Light. (Kerux goes to the North East. Hegemon takes Candidate behind Black Pillar, and stands behind Kerux. Hierus comes next, followed by Stolistes and Dadouchos. Kerux leads off, all salute on passing Hierophant who stands holding Scepter and Banner as in the Opening. Hierus drops out on reaching his Throne. Hegemon returns to between the Pillars after passing Hierophant twice. He directs Neophyte to follow Kerux who with the other Officers passes Hierophant thrice. After the third passing).

Hiero: Take your place North West of the Stolistes. (Kerux indicates this and goes on followed by Stolistes who falls out in the North and returns to his place. Hegemon replaces his chair between the Pillars and sits down. Kerux replaces the Rose, Lamp,

Cup and Paten in their proper places on the Altar. All are seated.) The Three Fold Cord bound about your waist, was an image of the three-fold bondage of Mortality, which amongst the Initiated is called earthly or material inclination, that has bound into a narrow place the once far-wandering Soul; and the Hood-wink was an image of the Darkness, of Ignorance, of Mortality that has blinded men to the Happiness and Beauty their eyes once looked upon. The Double Cubical Altar in the center of the Hall, is an emblem of visible Nature or the Material Universe, concealing within herself the mysteries of all dimensions, while revealing her surface to the exterior senses. It is a double cube because, as the Emerald Tablet has said The things that are below are a reflection of the things that are above. The world of men and women created to unhappiness is a reflection of the World of Divine Beings created to Happiness. It is described in the SEPHER YETZIRAH, or The Book of Formation, as An Abyss of Height and as an Abyss of Depth, An Abyss of the East and An Abyss of the West, An Abyss of the North and An Abyss of the South. The Altar is black because, unlike Divine Beings who unfold in the Element of Light, the Fires of Created Beings arise from Darkness and Obscurity. On the Altar is a White Triangle to be the Image of that Immortal Light, that Triune Light, which moved in Darkness and formed the World of Darkness and out of Darkness. There are two contending Forces and One always uniting them. And these Three have their Image in the three-fold Flame of our Being and in the threefold wave of the sensual world. (Hierophant stands in the form of Cross, saying:) Glory be to Thee, Father of the Undying. For Thy Glory flows out rejoicing, to the ends of the Earth! (He reseats himself.) The Red Cross above the White Triangle, is an Image of Him Who was unfolded in the Light. At its East, South, West and North Angles are a Rose, Fire, Cup of Wine and Bread and Salt. These allude to the Four Elements, Air, Fire, Water, Earth. The Mystical Words - KHABS AM PEKHT - are ancient Egyptian and are the origin of the Greek KONX OM PAX - which was uttered at the Eleusinian Mysteries. A literal translation would be Light Rushing Out in One Ray and they signify the same form of Light as that symbolized by the Staff of the Kerux. East of the Double Cubical Altar of created things, are the Pillars of Hermes and of Solomon. On these are painted certain Hieroglyphics from the 17th and the 125th Chapters of the Book of the Dead. They are the symbols of the two powers of Day and Night, Love and Hate, Work and Rest, the subtle force of the Lodestone and the Eternal out-pouring and in-pouring of the Heart of God. The Lamps that burn, though with a veiled light, upon their summits show that the Pathway to Hidden Knowledge, unlike the Pathway of Nature - which is a continual undulation, the winding hither and thither of the Serpent - is the straight and narrow way between them. It was because of this that I passed between them, when you came to the Light, and it was because of this that you were placed between them to receive the final Consecration. Two contending Forces and one which unites them eternally. Two basal angles of the triangle and one which forms the apex. Such is the origin of Creation, it is the Triad of Life. My Throne at the Gate of the East is the Place of the Guardian of the Dawning Sun. The Throne of the Hieres at the Gate of the West is the Place of the Guardian against the Multitudes that sleep through the Light and awaken at the twilight. The Throne of the Hegemon seated between the Columns is the Place of Balanced Power, between the Ultimate Light and the Ultimate Darkness. These meanings are shown in detail and by the color of our robes. The Wand of the Kerux is the Beam of Light from the Hidden Wisdom, and his Lamp is an emblem of the

everburning Lamp of the Guardian of the Mysteries. The Seat of the Stolistes at the Gate of the North is the Place of the Guardian of the Cauldron and the Well of Water - of Cold and Moisture. The Seat of the Dadouchos at the Gate of the South is the Place of the Guardian of the Lake of Fire and the Burning Bush.

Hiero: Honored Frater Kerux, I command you to declare that the Neophyte has been initiated into the Mysteries of the Neophyte Grade. (Kerux advances to the North East, faces West, raises his Wand and says:)

Kerux: In the name of the Lord of the Universe and by command of the Very Honored Hierophant, hear all ye that I proclaim that (name of aspirant) who will hereafter be known unto you by the Motto XYZ, has been admitted in due form to the Neophyte grade of the Order of the Golden Dawn in the Outer. (All clap hands.)

Hiero: Very Honored Hiererus, I delegate to you the duty of pronouncing a short address to our Frater on his admission.

Hiereus: As you have now passed through the ceremony of your admission, allow me to congratulate you on being admitted a member of this ancient and honorable Order, whose professed object and end is the practical study of Occult Science. Let me therefore advise you to remember this day as a marked one in your existence and to adopt and cultivate a mental condition worthy of this Order. To this end let me first earnestly recommend you never to forget due honor and reverence to the Lord of the Universe, for as the whole is greater than its parts, so is He far greater than we, who are but as sparks derived from that unsupportable Light which is in Him. It is written that the borders of his Garment of Flame sweep the ends of the Universe and unto Him all return. Therefore do we adore Him; therefore do we invoke Him; therefore in adoration to Him sinks even the Banner of the East. (Done) Secondly, let me advise you never to ridicule or cast obloquy upon the form of religion professed by another, for what right have you to desecrate what is sacred in his eyes? Thirdly, never let the seal of secrecy regarding the Order be absent from your recollection, and beware that you betray it not by a casual or unthinking word. Fourthly, study well that Great Arcanum, the proper equilibrium of mercy and severity, for either unbalanced is not good; unbalanced severity is cruelty and oppression; unbalanced mercy is but weakness and would permit evil to exist unchecked, thus making itself as it were the accomplice of that evil. Lastly, do not be daunted by the difficulties of Occult Study and remember that every obstacle can at length be conquered by perseverance.

Hiero: Before you can pass on to the next Higher Grade of this Order you will have to make yourself perfect in the following: 1) The names and alchemical symbols of the four elements. 2) The names, astrological symbols and elemental attribution of the twelve signs of the Zodiac. 3) The names and astrological symbols of the seven planets, also their houses, exaltation and triplicity in the Zodiac. 4) The names, characters and numerical values of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. 5) The names and English meanings of the ten Qabalistic Sephiroth. A MSS. lecture on these subjects of study may be obtained on application. When you know these thoroughly you must

signify the same by letter to the Cancellarius or Scribe. You will then be examined and if found perfect you will be eligible for admission to the next higher grade, should the higher powers approve your application.

Kerux: (Conducts Candidate to his table, gives him a solution and tells him to pour a few drops on the plate before him). As this pure and limpid fluid is changed into the semblance of blood, so mayest thou perish if thou betrayest thine oath of secrecy to this Order by word or deed.

Hiero: Resume your seat and remember that your admission to this Order gives you no right to initiate any other person without dispensation from the Grand High Chiefs of the Second Order.

CLOSING

Kerux: (As in opening) HEKAS, HEKAS, ESTE BEBELOI.

Hiero: (Knocks) Fratres and Sorores of the Order of the Golden Dawn in the Outer assist me to close this Hall in the Grade of Neophyte. (All rise).

Hiereus: (3 Knocks)

Heg: (3 Knocks)

Hiero: (3 Knocks) Frater Kerux, see that the Hall is properly guarded.

Kerux: (Having done so) Very Honored Hierophant, the Hall is properly guarded.

Hiero: Honored Hiereus, assure yourself that all present have witnessed the Golden Dawn.

Hiereus: Fratres and Sorores of the Order of the Golden Dawn in the Outer, give the signs of a Neophyte. (Done) Very Honored Hierophant (saluting), all present have been so honored.

Hiero: Frater Stolistes, I command you to purify the Hall and the members by water. (Done as in opening.)

Hiero: Frater Dadouchos, I command you to purify the Hall and the members by fire. (Done as in opening.)

Hiero: Let the mystic circumambulation take place in the Path of Light. (Kerux goes by the South to the South East. Hegemon goes to the North and leads the new Neophyte by West and South, directing him to follow Hegemon in the Procession. Hiereus follows Neophyte and Stolistes follows Hiereus, accompanied or followed by Dadouchos, and Sentinel ends the procession. As they pass the Hierophant, who is standing and holding the Banner of the East in his left hand, the Scepter in his right, they make the Neophyte

Signs. Hierous drops out when his Throne is reached. Hegemon passes Hierophant twice and then takes his place between the Pillars, directing Neophyte to follow Kerux who, after the third passing of Hierophant, directs Neophyte to his seat, the other Officers dropping out as their places are reached.) The Mystical Reverse Circumambulation is accomplished. It is the symbol of Fading Light. Let us adore the Lord of the Universe. (All turn East. Stolistes directs Neophyte to rise and face East. Hierophant faces East, making the salute at each adoration, the others, Officers and Members repeating it also.)

Holy art Thou, Lord of the Universe!
Holy art Thou, Whom Nature hath not formed!
Holy art Thou, the Vast and the Mighty One!
Lord of the Light and of the Darkness!

Kerux: It is finished! (Kerux replaces the Cup and returns to his place. All rise.)

Hiero: (Knocks) TETELESTAI!

Hierous: (Knocks)

Heg: (Knocks)

Nothing now remains but to partake together in silence of the Mystic Repast, composed of the symbols of the Four Elements, and to remember our pledge of secrecy. (All are seated.) (Hierophant puts down his Scepter and returns the Banner of the East to its place. He goes to the West of the Altar and facing East gives the Saluting Sign but not the Sign of Silence, and taking up the Rose says:) I invite you to inhale with me the perfume of this Rose, as a symbol of air. (Smells Rose). To feel with me the warmth of this sacred Fire. (Spreads his hands over it). To eat with me this Bread and Salt as types of Earth. (Dips bread in Salt and eats). And finally to drink with me this Wine, the consecrated emblem of Elemental Water. (Makes a Cross with the Cup and drinks. Hierophant puts down the Cup between the Cross and Triangle. He comes East of the Altar and faces West. The Praemonstrator then comes to the West of the Altar and makes the Saluting Sign. Hierophant replies with the sign of Silence and then hands the Elements, beginning with the Rose which Praemonstrator smells and returns; then feels the warmth of the Lamp, eats the Bread and Salt and receives from the Hierophant the Cup with which he makes a Cross, and having drunk, returns it. Hierophant then passes by West and South to his Throne. Praemonstrator then comes to the East of the Altar. Imperator comes to the West, exchanges Signs and partakes. He returns to his place, after serving Cancellarius who in turn serves the Past Hierophant. After the Chiefs, the Officers partake in this order: Hierous, Hegemon, Stolistes, Dadouchos. When all the Officers except Kerux have partaken, the Inner Members in order of seniority of admission, partake but do not wait for instruction in this. If there is a pause, one comes forward. Next come the members of the Outer in the same manner - the Neophytes coming last piloted by Hegemon or any Officer appointed. The Order of procedure for Outer members is: Philosophi, Practici, Theorici, Zelatores, Neophytes. When the last

Neophyte stands East of the Altar, Kerux comes to the West, exchanges the Signs and partakes. Hegemon directs Neophyte to return to his place as soon as Kerux takes the Cup. Kerux, on receiving the Cup, drains it, inverts it, and says:)

Hiero: (Knocks) KHABS.

Hiereus: (Knocks) AM.

Heg: (Knocks) PEKHT.

Hiereus: (Knocks) KONX

Heg: (Knocks) OM.

Hiero: (Knocks) PAX.

Heg: (Knocks) LIGHT

Hiero: (Knocks) IN.

Hiereus: (Knocks) EXTENSION.

(All make the Signs towards the Altar.)

Hiero: May what we have partaken maintain us in our search for the QUINTESSENCE, the Stone of the Philosophers. True Wisdom, Perfect Happiness, the SUMMUM BONUM. (Officers remain in the Temple while the new Neophyte is led out by Kerux.)

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The Golden Dawn FAQ
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THE GOLDEN DAWN: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND RESOURCE LISTS
Version 6.0, December 1999

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I. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

(1) What is the Golden Dawn?

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn is an initiatory society devoted to spiritual, philosophical, and magical development. The ideas studied by Golden Dawn initiates

are a unique combination of Jewish Kabbalah, ancient Egyptian and Greek mysteries, several strands of Christianity, and many other Western esoteric traditions. To quote its ``history lecture," (from Israel Regardie's book, *The Golden Dawn*),

``The Order of the G.D. [Golden Dawn] is an Hermetic Society whose members are taught the principles of Occult Science and the Magic of Hermes."

The Golden Dawn was founded in 1887 by three British Freemasons (see the brief history in Part II, below), and it admitted hundreds of men and women over the next several decades. The original Golden Dawn generated a body of esoteric knowledge about Hermetic magic, divination, alchemy, and philosophy that is unparalleled to this day. Traditions as seemingly different as Chaos Magic and Gardnerian Wicca have roots in the Golden Dawn, and it has been of profound influence in the lives of artists (e.g., the poet W. B. Yeats, the author Arthur Machen) and scholars (e.g., A. E. Waite). The fascinating spiritual mysteries taught by the Golden Dawn continue to have a profound impact on people from all walks of life.

The Golden Dawn ``system of magic" is a tool designed to educate the student of the esoteric in both practical matters of ritual and divination, and in abstract metaphysical ideas. The focus of the Golden Dawn material is primarily Western - i.e., Judeo-Christian, Greek, and Egyptian - but some Eastern ideas have crept in over the years. It is a ``hierarchical" or ``matricular" system, in that certain information is reserved for students who have passed beyond a certain point in their occult education. The system of grades is as follows (along with their correspondences with the classical elements, the seven ancient planets, and the ten ``sephiroth" or spiritual ``spheres" of the Jewish Kabbalah), with the student beginning at the top:

Order	Grade	Grade Name	Element	Planet	Sephira
0 = 0	Neophyte	---	---	---	
1 = 10	Zelator	Earth	---	Malkuth	(Kingdom)
2 = 9	Theoricus	Air	Moon	Yesod	(Foundation)
3 = 8	Practicus	Water	Mercury	Hod	(Splendour)
4 = 7	Philosophus	Fire	Venus	Netzach	(Victory)
5 = 6	Adeptus Minor	Spirit	Sun	Tiphareth	(Beauty)
6 = 5	Adeptus Major	---	Mars	Gevurah	(Might)
7 = 4	Adeptus Exemptus	---	Jupiter	Chesed	(Mercy)
8 = 3	Magister Templi	---	Saturn	Binah	(Understanding)
9 = 2	Magus	---	---	Chokmah	(Wisdom)
10 = 1	Ipsissimus	---	---	Kether	(Crown)

The grades of Neophyte through Philosophus comprise the First, or Outer Order. A grade called the ``Portal" comes between 4=7 and 5=6, and this contains some very powerful symbolism on the transition between the Outer and Inner ``Mysteries." The three Adept grades comprise the Second, or Inner Order (*Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis*), and are normally only open to those who pass rigorous examinations and are chosen on other qualifications. The final three grades (which refer to the ``Supernal" sephiroth) comprise the Third, or Hidden Order of Masters. There is considerable

disagreement among Order sources as to whether living human beings can attain these final mystical grades (not unlike the Bodhisattvas of Buddhism, it seems).

Please note that the above is just a brief summary, and that many details have been omitted for the sake of clarity. For more information, many of the books and articles listed in the Reference section can be of assistance, as can some of the World Wide Web sites associated with Active Golden Dawn Temples.

Some may wonder why people would want to pursue their spiritual goals via the antiquated, or even superstitious, means of ceremonial magic. Mary K. Greer, in *Women of the Golden Dawn*, notes that there are several different definitions of magic that have different connotations:

“While some writers have regarded magic as psycho-therapeutic work (Francis King and Israel Regardie, for example), others have characterized it as the discovery of the unity within all duality, the truth behind all illusions. W. B. Yeats sought knowledge of what he called ‘the single energetic Mind,’ and its pole, ‘the single Memory of nature,’ both of which he believed could be evoked by symbols. But I like Florence Farr’s definition of magic best: ‘Magic is unlimited experience.’ That is, magic consists of removing the limitations from what we think are the earthly and spiritual laws that bind or compel us. We can be anything because we are All.”

(2) Is the Golden Dawn a religion?

Definitely not. Although religious and metaphysical concepts are the focus of much of the Golden Dawn material, “there is nothing contrary to your civil, moral, or religious duties” (to quote the Neophyte initiation ceremony) in any oaths or Order matters. This is a landmark that seems to have been passed down from Freemasonry, one of the primary sources of the Golden Dawn initiatory structure. However, an overall notion of religious tolerance pervades the Golden Dawn, for one is also reminded (in the same ceremony), to “Remember that you hold all Religions in reverence, for there is none but contains a Ray from the Ineffable Light that you are seeking.”

(Note: My source for the text of the above oaths/obligations comes from Regardie’s published account of Stella Matutina ceremonies, *The Golden Dawn*. Some modern groups most probably have changed some parts of these obligations - especially the parts that deal with keeping the rituals, membership, and even the existence of the Order completely secret. It is always a good idea, of course, to inquire about these things before pursuing membership in any organization. See Question 3, below.)

For those who would decry all things “occult” as Satanic and/or pagan, know that the higher degrees of the Golden Dawn seem to grow more and more Christian in character as one climbs the hierarchy of grades. The influence of the Rosicrucians, a mystical/mythical Christian organization dating from the 17th century, is strong indeed (see Question 5). For those who shy away from the often-overbearing aegis of

Christendom, don't despair, as there is enough symbolism present in the Golden Dawn material to satisfy nearly any taste. Jewish Kabbalah, Islam, Hinduism, the Egyptian and Greek Mysteries, and even the Celtic mythos have all been integrated into Golden Dawn work at one time or another.

One final disclaimer: While this author heartily believes that religious partisanship has no place in the Golden Dawn, this is by no means the only opinion. Some Golden Dawn groups, for example, are said to explicitly bar Thelemites (see Question 8) from membership in their Second Order. If anyone can verify this position, or provide any other similar ones, I would like to know, and would make such implicit requirements known in Part IV, below.

(3) Is the hierarchy of grades merely a ruse to empower the ``enlightened?"

Well, even Magical Orders are made up of human beings, and some inevitably take advantage of the ``faithful." This can come in many guises: expensive dues for a trickle of information, out-and-out lies about magical powers or ancient sources, forced therapy before advancement, uncomfortable initiations, or expulsion if one holds a differing viewpoint. As with anything else, place your caveat firmly in your emptor before taking any action.

However, the concept of the hierarchy of grades has its definite merits. First of all, consider the parallels with education in general. One must first learn ones' alphabet before learning to read; and learn to read before understanding Tom Sawyer, let alone Finnegans Wake. Also, training in magic necessarily involves an exploration of different modes and areas of ones' own consciousness, the experiencing of which can very well be jolting, frightening, or even life-threatening. Some aspects of the psyche are best left unexplored until one develops the tools and stamina necessary for the journey.

The issue of secrecy is an F.A.I. (Frequently Argued Issue) in many forums on and off the Internet, and for the most part, most of the original Golden Dawn ``secrets" have already been (or are in the process of being) published. However, it still comes up often enough to address a few points. Why keep certain things secret, you may ask? Well...

It is worth it not to have everything handed to you all at once. Whether it is working out physics problems, or reading an Agatha Christie mystery novel, skipping to the end for the ``answers" can take something away from the experience.

Many posit the existence of a ``Group Mind" which can develop in some seriously minded associations of individuals. ``Secrecy" here (which is sometimes termed

``Silence" to differentiate it from a more widely spread hoarding of knowledge) is just an outgrowth of simple privacy, commitment, and integrity among a closely knit group of people, who don't want their business known by the entire world. Of course, when their ``business" begins to entail the propagation of a tradition claimed to be of benefit to all humankind, it becomes harder to justify secrecy as a simple privacy issue.

One must differentiate between information and knowledge. There is a huge difference between the basic facts of a craft (which can be and are set down in books) and the actual skills that people develop from accumulated experience (which usually cannot even be expressed in concise words, let alone written down). I think many would agree, to use Colin Low's analogy, that a ``Do It Yourself Brain Surgery" book would be a bad idea. The knowledge isn't really a secret, but it's certainly not available for everyone's immediate use, either.

All things considered, however, secrecy is something which should certainly be left up to each individual. To quote alt.magick's resident terminator, Tyagi Nagasiva, ``There are very many good reasons for secrecy, and very few for requiring it."

(4) Are Golden Dawn Temples still active? How can I become a member?

Yes, there are Temples still thriving, from the U.S.A. to New Zealand. See Part IV, the list of active Golden Dawn Temples and related organizations, below.

Becoming a member of a magical order, however, is something that should not be taken lightly. An insightful study of many of the pro's and con's was published by Donald Michael Kraig in an article called ``So you want to join a Magical Order..." in The Llewellyn New Times (May-June 1992, no. 923). A few general things to note, however:

Don't count on having ``secrets" revealed to you. Ninety-nine percent of them are already published, in some form, somewhere.

The symbols and metaphors used by a particular group or tradition may not ``work" for you. Even different ``Golden Dawn" groups vary in their focus or underlying worldview, and many have altered or expanded upon the original 19th century G.D. material. Don't confuse the map (the association of individuals) with the territory (the system of symbol and ritual).

Listen to your common sense! If something doesn't feel right to you, by all means don't do it. Not everyone seems meant to work within an Order - possibly you can do better, and create something new!

(5) How is the Golden Dawn connected with the Rosicrucians?

The Golden Dawn's own ceremonies claim a descent (in spirit if not a direct lineage) with the Rosicrucians, a mystic Christian organization that may, or may not have "existed" in the strictest sense of the word. A short history of Rosicrucianism in in order.

In about the year 1610, an anonymous document entitled Fama Fraternitatis of the Meritorious Order of the Rosy Cross was distributed among German occultists, and was printed at Cassel in 1614. It describes the founding of a secret order of enlightened learning in the Hermetic and Christian mysteries. The (mythical) life story of the founder, C.R.C. (Christian Rosenkreutz) is related, as well as the discovery of his wondrous tomb centuries later. A second manifesto, Confessio Fraternitatis (1615), describes the Rosicrucian Order in more detail, and firmly takes sides against the Papacy. A third document, The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz, is an interesting alchemical fantasy, probably written by Lutheran pastor Johann Valentine Andreae in his impetuous youth, but with little to do with the previous documents.

The publication of these documents met an eager public, and many published their scholarly and religious "credentials" hoping to get noticed and chosen for membership. After about twenty years, however, this fervor seemingly died down. It wasn't until the late 1600s and early 1700s that hints of Rosicrucianism began to reappear, and the Rosicrucian egregore seemed to find a home in Freemasonry. From England to Russia, Masonic/Rosicrucian groups flourished in the late 1700s, and the most well-known were the Gold- und Rosenkreutzens in Germany. Again, however, this activity seemed to fade into the background until the late 1800s, with the popular revival of esotericism and the occult in England. The Masonic Societas Rosicruciana described below (Part II) was the immediate precursor of the Golden Dawn, but no known direct connection is known with the original 17th century Rosicrucians.

In the 20th century, there has been a virtual explosion of groups claiming the Rosicrucian mantle, and it is quite wisely that the Adeptus Minor of the G.D. is warned to be wary of "strangers" claiming to be members of the Rosicrucian Order - especially those that claim that their group is the only Rosicrucian Order. This author agrees with Paul Foster Case's assessment that the "True and Invisible" Rosicrucian Order is a shared "state of mind," not an actual organized society. Thus, any historical links between Rosicrucianism and the Golden Dawn seem to be much less important than the fact that many members of the G.D. have been and are in touch with the "soul" or egregore of the Rosy Cross.

Ex Deo nascimur, in Jesu morimur, per Spiritum Sanctum reviviscimus.

(6) How is the Golden Dawn connected with Freemasonry?

The Golden Dawn was founded by three Freemasons (Mathers, Woodman, and Westcott) and contains a great deal of Masonically derived symbolism, but has no formal connection with Freemasonry or any of its appendant bodies.

Like in the case of many other "fringe" or "occult" societies founded in the later years of the 19th century, the founders of the Golden Dawn adapted the existing allegorical and dramatic framework of Masonic ceremonies when constructing the G.D. In the Outer Order, both the layout of the Temple and the functions of Officers seem to closely mirror those of the Blue Lodge of Masonry. The names of the grades, as well as the titles bestowed upon initiates, were taken from those of the 18th century Masonic Gold- und Rosenkreutzers. In the Inner Order, the Rosicrucian drama enacted in the initiation rituals is reminiscent of that in the "Rose Croix" degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, and is certainly related to the ceremonies of the Masonic Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, from which the Golden Dawn was indirectly spawned.

Some scholars have suggested that there is a more direct connection between the Golden Dawn and Masonry: a historical one, via a possible source of the mysterious "Cipher Manuscripts" which Westcott and Mathers used to construct the Outer Order rituals. Several sources have alluded to the existence of little-known Masonic groups in the early 19th century which have an eerie similarity with the Golden Dawn. Specifically, there have been two (possibly related, possibly identical) possibilities:

The Loge zur aufgehenden Morgenrothe, a Masonic Lodge in Frankfurt with a primarily Jewish membership. Referred to in French as the Aurore naissante, (both titles meaning "Rising Dawn"), this group was founded by three Masons connected with the Rite of Strict Observance of von Hund. In 1817, a subsidiary Lodge was formed in London by the Duke of Sussex, the Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England. In 1822, it was closed by an Anton Wolf, who might have been a representative from the Mother Lodge in Frankfurt.

A Qabalistic College in London, also known as the Chabraith Zerek Aour Bokher ("Society of the Shining Light of the Dawn"), formed around 1810 by a Johannes Friedrich Falk, from Hamburg, Germany. Mentioned mainly by Kenneth Mackenzie's Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia, this organization might not actually have existed. Both of these supposed London-based Lodges have been argued to be the infamous second "Hermanubis" Temple of the Golden Dawn. The Cipher Manuscripts, which were probably written circa 1860-1870, are similarly argued to have come indirectly from one of these groups, via such varied persons as Kenneth Mackenzie, Lord Bulwer-Lytton, or Frederick Hockley. Further research is definitely required to prove any of these hypotheses. For more information, see:

Gilbert, R. A., 1990,
"Provenance Unknown: A Tentative Solution to the Riddle of the Cipher Manuscript of

the Golden Dawn," in *Wege und Abwege: Beiträe zur europaeischen Geistesgeschichte der Neuzeit*, ed. A. Goetz von Olenhusen (Freiburg: Hochschul Verlag), p. 79.

Heisler, R. 1989,
"Precursors of the Golden Dawn," in *Cauda Pavonis: Studies in Hermeticism*, v. 8, no. 1, 1-4.

Kuntz, Darcy. 1996,
The Complete Golden Dawn Cipher Manuscript (Edmonds, Washington: Holmes Publishing Group). [Reprints Gilbert's article listed above.]

Prinke, R. T. 1987,
"The Deeper Roots of the Golden Dawn," in *The Hermetic Journal*, 36, 16.

(7) Who was Israel Regardie?

Dr. Francis Israel Regardie (17 Nov 1907 - 10 Mar 1985, motto *Ad Maiorem Adonai Gloriam*, or "To the greatness of the Lord") was a relative latecomer in the Golden Dawn, joining Felkin's *Hermes Temple of the Stella Matutina* in about 1934. He is most infamously known for publishing *The Golden Dawn* a few years later, thereby breaking his oath of secrecy. Every Order ritual, from 0=0 to 5=6, was included, along with many of the original "knowledge lectures" and "flying rolls" (instructional manuscripts) written by Mathers and Westcott.

Although initially spurned by his G.D. peers, lately Regardie has been seemingly vindicated. The publishing of the Order material in a relatively complete form has certainly kept the Golden Dawn from being lost to the mists of time. Many of the modern G.D. Orders claim an "apostolic succession" through Regardie, so it seems he has been sufficiently forgiven. During the last few years of his life, he authorized a few different Golden Dawn groups to carry on his work (see Part IV).

Recently, Regardie's role in the propagation of Golden Dawn documents has been called into question. Bill Heidrick, the Grand Treasurer General of the O.T.O., wrote on 14 April 1994:

"Regardie's Golden Dawn was a joint enterprise between Israel Regardie and Gerald Yorke. Yorke supplied the materials, as Francis (I. Regardie) told me himself. Yorke had warning from his family as far back as the days of *Equinox* Vol.I never to allow publicity of his connections with either Crowley or the Golden Dawn. This is not surprising in that the family was and is not very far removed from the succession to the British throne. When G.D. was to be published this ban was serious enough for Gerald to act as a

silent partner and unannounced co-author with Francis. Toward the end of his life Gerald did relax his privacy a little, to the extent of taking an occasional "bow" in print and supporting Ellic Howe with an intro to The Magicians of the Golden Dawn. The largest public collection of Golden Dawn and Crowley MSS is the Yorke collection in the Warburg Institute at the University of London. That is Gerald's collection, fortified with materials provided by Karl Germer."

Although Yorke probably helped Regardie track down papers for the later book, The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic, it is difficult to assess his impact on the earlier published materials. Regardie's own initiatory status in the 1930s has also been under dispute. He claimed that he was an Adept (5=6) of the Hermes Temple, but some have claimed that he could not have achieved this degree in the short time he was a member. However, several recent letters and papers have been found (and posted to the Usenet news group alt.magick) which indicate clearly that Regardie had received the 5=6 grade from the Hermes Temple. Hopefully this material will be published eventually in a complete and permanent form.

Some claim that Regardie, later in life, attained the higher degrees of 6=5 and 7=4, and was glad to finally receive true initiation (contrasted to the ceremonies of the "Inepti" at Hermes Temple). Harvey Newstrom, a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn that Regardie sponsored in the 1980s, wrote on 18 April 1994:

"Regardie was given a certificate of 6=5 after visiting New Zealand. This was an honorary degree that was intended to show respect and affirmation of Regardie's work. Regardie was not a member of the New Zealand branch of the G.D., he did not study from them, he did not undergo examination from them nor did he demonstrate the completion of the requisites for that level. Most importantly, Regardie still maintained the title, signatures, magical insignia, and other ensigns of office as appropriate for his actual level. He never upgraded his own assesment to claim any higher degrees. After Regardie's death, the New Zealand group also sent a 7=4 certificate filled out for Regardie. Dated after his death, this certificate certainly was an honorary one." Patrick Zalewski, in Secret Inner Order Rituals of the G.D., claims that Regardie "...participated in a 6=5 ceremony as one of the Temple Officers" during his visit to new Zealand in August 1983, but the issue of his initiatory status is left unclear. The certificate in question was reproduced in facsimile in early editions of The Complete Golden Dawn System of Magic, and was dated 10 October 1984, before his death.

(8) What connection did Aleister Crowley have with the Golden Dawn?

Edward Alexander (Aleister) Crowley (1875-1947) joined the Isis-Urania Temple of the G.D. in November of 1898, and quickly advanced to the grade of Adeptus Minor by January of 1900. Crowley grew distasteful of the pretentious dealings between many of the members, and of the fact that many were initiated for no other reason than their "worldly prosperity."

His "history lection" (with the line numbers removed for readability) from Liber LXI vel

Causae A.'.A.'. tells his side of the story:

“In 1900 one P., a brother, [Crowley, “Perdurabo”] instituted a rigorous test of S.R.M.D. [Mathers] on the one side and the Order on the other. He discovered that S.R.M.D., though a scholar of some ability and a magician of remarkable powers, had never attained complete initiation: and further had fallen from his original place, he having imprudently attracted to himself forces of evil too great and terrible for him to withstand. The claim of the Order that the true adepts were in charge of it was definitely disproved. In the Order, with two certain exceptions and two doubtful ones, he found no persons prepared for initiation of any sort. He thereupon by his subtle wisdom destroyed both the Order and its chief.”

While the last statements certainly are not literally true (both the G.D. and Mathers long surviving Crowley's defection), it certainly sheds light on the “birth” of the Golden Dawn's first “pseudo-messiah,” as Gerald Yorke termed Crowley.

Crowley's subsequent magical work, too lengthy to describe completely here, was a unique and singular accomplishment. His reception of Liber AL vel Legis in Cairo in 1904 marked the beginning of a “new aeon” of the world, and of the religion/philosophy of Thelema. Many of the details of ritual and magical doctrine that Crowley continued to propagate, however, were intimately connected with his beginnings in the Golden Dawn.

The two primary esoteric Orders which Crowley either created or placed his unique imprint upon are the A.A. and the O.T.O. (Ordo Templi Orientis).

The A.A., which some claim stands for “Astron Argon,” “Aster Argos,” or “Argentum Astrum” (Greek and Latin for “Silver Star”), was Crowley's idea of the ideal and individualized initiatory regimen. Most lineages (which usually are passed down on a one-on-one basis) follow the Golden Dawn-like grade system and magical/mystical “curriculum” set down in Crowley's “One Star in Sight,” which is in *Magick in Theory and Practice*. Also, the recently published *Mystical and Magical System of the A.'.A.'.*, by James Eshelman, is a good source of information on this subject (see the Reference list, Part V, below).

The O.T.O. was founded in 1895 by Karl Kellner as a concretization of various Masonic rites, and also as a vehicle for the teaching of tantric-based sexual magic. In 1922, Crowley took over as Outer Head of the Order (OHO), and modified its focus to conform to his “new aeon” Thelemic revelations. Although still an initiatory organization, the O.T.O. is concerned mainly with the social, economic, and interactive aspects of magic and Thelema, rather than on presenting an individualized system of spirituality (as is the regime of the A.A.). The O.T.O. today is at its largest size ever, with over 3000 members, and many of the active North American G.D. groups listed below have some cross-membership with the O.T.O.. Crowley's *Equinox*, especially the recently written Volume III, Number 10, is a good reference for the O.T.O., as is the Web site for the U.S. Grand Lodge.

(9) How does one get started?

First, there exist various other "getting started" documents on magic and esoteric spirituality posted to several Usenet news groups (e.g., alt.magick, alt.pagan, and many others), as well as on many Internet WWW and FTP sites. A good example is Christopher Ward's Notes to a Neophyte. Since the suggestions below come from a Golden Dawn point of view, these other more general documents may also be of interest.

Prior to the publication of most of the Golden Dawn material, the only real way to "get started" was by petitioning an active Temple, being accepted, and going through the Neophyte (0=0) initiation ceremony. While this is still an option, easy access to the bulk of the Golden Dawn material has opened up other, more solitary avenues of approach. What follow are two basic techniques (one meditative, one ceremonial) that have helped many to begin on the road to their "Great Work."

(A) The Neophyte Meditation

This exercise in concentration and stilling the mind contains two general components - breathing and visualization - but some helpful hints about relaxation and concentration might be in order first. Make yourself comfortable (sit or lay down) and try to relax the body. Starting at the feet, clench and release various muscles, and work up the body to the head and face. Think of your warm blood coursing through your body, enriching each part as it relaxes. If you fall asleep, that's fine, but you may want to find a better time of day to do this. Breathe from the abdomen, not the chest.

Rhythmic Breathing: The "fourfold breath" is suggested for beginners:

inhale fully, while counting 1-2-3-4
hold the breath, while counting 1-2-3-4
exhale fully, while counting 1-2-3-4
hold the breath, while counting 1-2-3-4

Visualization: From the First Knowledge Lecture (cf. Regardie's Golden Dawn),

"Let the Neophyte consider a point as defined in mathematics - having position, but no magnitude - and let him note the ideas to which this gives rise. Concentrating his faculties on this, as a focus, let him endeavor to realise the Immanence of the Divine throughout Nature, in all her aspects."

This "primitive point" (in Hebrew, NQVDH RAShVNH) can be fruitfully compared to the initial point of the creation of the universe, as is described in the Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment (translated below by Daniel Chanan Matt, NY: Paulist Press, 1983):

``A blinding spark flashed
within the Concealed of the Concealed
from the mystery of the Infinite,
a cluster of vapor in formlessness,

...

Deep within the spark gushed a flow
imbuing colors below,
concealed within the concealed of the mystery of the Infinite.
The flow broke through and did not break through its aura.
It was not known at all
until, under the impact of breaking through,
one high and hidden point shone.
Beyond that point, nothing is known.
So it is called Beginning,
the first command of all."

A comparison can also be made to various modern scientific theories of the ``Big Bang," which is thought to have occurred within an infinitesimally small point which encompassed all of the present-day universe.

(B) The Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram (LBRP)

The ritual act of ``banishing" stems from an old notion that magic must be performed in a purified environment, and that ``evil spirits" (or undesired ``unconscious thought forms") must first be told to vacate the premises. A more recent interpretation is that of delineating a ``sacred space" at the beginning of a ritual, apart from the mundane world. The focus is often on a military-like attention to detail, which helps to construct this impregnable ``circle" around the magician.

The following banishing ritual was given to Neophytes of the Golden Dawn to get them prepared and accustomed to dealing with the spiritual realm. It is also a frequently used component at the beginning and end of many rituals.

First, perform the Qabalistic Cross:

Face East, and take a steel dagger in your right hand.

Touch your forehead , and say . . . ATEH (Thou art)

Touch your breast , and say . . . MALKUTH (the kingdom)

Touch your right shoulder, and say . . . Ve-GEBURAH (and the power)

Touch your left shoulder, and say . . . Ve-GEDULAH (and the glory)

Clasp your left hand over your right hand hand before you, and say . . . Le-OLAM (for ever)

Turn the dagger upwards, and say . . . AMEN

Next, while facing the East, trace a ``banishing pentagram of Earth," in the order 1-2-3-4-5-1, in the air in front of you:

banishing pentagram of earth

Simultaneously with tracing the pentagram, ``vibrate" the Hebrew God-name IHVH. Rotate clockwise, tracing out one quarter of a circle in the air with your dagger, and face South. Trace the pentagram again, and vibrate ADNI. Rotate clockwise, and face West. Trace the pentagram again, and vibrate AHIH. Rotate clockwise, and face North. Trace the pentagram again, and vibrate AGLA. Rotate clockwise, and come back around to the East, closing the circle.

Upon completing the Circle, form a Great Cross (feet together, arms extended horizontally with palms forward), close your eyes, and recite the archangelic powers stationed about the Circle:

``Before me, Raphael
Behind me, Gabriel
At my right hand, Michael
At my left hand, Auriel.
Before me flames the Pentagram -
Behind me shines the Six-Rayed Star."

Follow with the Qabalistic Cross again, and you're finished.

An interesting analysis and interpretation of this ritual, along with some personal commentary as to its potential, is given below:

-----BEGIN-QUOTATION-----

From: markk@cypress.West.Sun.COM (Mark Kampe)
Subject: a lesser banishing
Newsgroups: alt.magick
Date: 31 Oct 1994 16:45:34 GMT

The words are widely known, but it occurred to me that I've never seen a discussion of the melody and harmonies that give them meaning. Surely, like the Tao, ``the tune that can be told is not the true tune." None, the less, I thought I would try to describe some of the experiences that have accompanied some of my attempts at a LBRP.

P.S. ... For those who know the words,
please sing along, and tell me how the tune works for you.
For those who have your own tunes,
would you consider trying to share one?
For those who don't haven't tried the song,
this may not make much sense at all.

0. I begin with receptive silence, first bringing the room into order, then bringing my body into repose, then my breathing

into measured rhythm, and finally my thoughts. I cannot begin this work until I have ceased doing other things.

1. Using my father's dagger I trace the circle, and the cross, addressing myself to the ritual. It seems a bit like an introduction (to the One ``who needs no introduction" :-). The real purpose, however, is to remind me where I am, and why I have come here ... and it does that pretty effectively. Establishing my relationship to the power is indeed an important preliminary to the remainder of the ritual.
2. Facing the rising sun, I inhale and look for the word that brought about the creation. I gaze through the letters that symbolize the ne-plus-ultra and try to find the sound that they represent. This is the word I need to trigger my own creation today. When the Yod becomes clear, I am the Heh that receives it, and the Vau they become wells within me, giving rise to the Heh that I return to the cosmos, and in so doing, animate the first sigil.

I pause, as the light kindles, to experience the resonance between the ultimate power of creation, and the power of creation within myself.

3. Turning from sunrise to the sun at full Zenith, I reflect on the awesome majesty of creation, and the power that permeates it. As I contemplate the inconceivable wonder of the universe (with all of its myriad worlds and souls), I search for the name of its Lord ... so that I may trace my next sigil in celebration of Hir glory.

Once again, I pause to wait for the channel to come to life and savor my small glimpse of the almighty.

4. Turning towards the setting sun, I reflect on the glory I have been privileged to behold. I note my breathing, and the implicit continuous prayer it offers in praise to the spirit of life. ``Ruach" means both ``breath" and ``spirit," and in our breathing we speak the holy name more perfectly than words ever could.

I seek to make each breath a more ardent and perfect prayer, and an act of communion. When my breath has become the name of life, I carve a sigil into which that principle can be enshrined, and welcome the spirit of life into my circle.

5. Turning to the north, I see nothing, and so confront myself - body and spirit, ego and instrument of divine will, animal and god. What am I and what am I to become? How am I to resolve a myriad of aspirations and urges? The answer is not in allowing myself to become a battleground for a thousand balkanized aspects of my own nature. The answer lies in finding purpose and becoming an instrument of that purpose.

And so I acknowledge my need, and my inescapable obligation to understand and serve the divine will. As I speak the oath that binds me to that will, I carve the sigil that must be simultaneously the instrument of my destruction and the key to my salvation.

6. Turning again to the rising sun, and standing in the center of these channels, I look forward to find the spirit of guidance. My needs and aspirations have been anticipated, and provided for. I need not want for guide or teacher. I have but to open my eyes and see them.
7. The power of life swells behind me and within me, compelling me to action and empowering me to achieve. Life is that which does, and that which becomes. I am life, and the power is within me ... or perhaps more properly, I am a manifestation of that power.
8. On my right, I reach out to the light that vanquishes all darkness. I find therein perfection, protection and a power beyond that of life. I recognize it for what it is. I recognize that it is always there, and that I can always draw upon it (if I have but eyes to see it). I open myself to the light.
9. On my left, I reach out to a world bathed in divine light and see its richness, beauty, and perfection. It shames me to recognize how seldom I see the world so illuminated, and I am grateful to be reminded again of its true nature.
10. I stand surrounded by, and attuned to, four open channels for divine energy. Standing naked in the focal point, I reach out, simultaneously, to each. As the four streams of light converge in me, each carrying its own energy into me, I feel the parts of myself that are being brought into resonance.

Finally, like a laser, pumped at the right frequency,
I burst forth with a nova-like brilliance, now a source
of light myself ... and unlike the sigils through which
this energy was channeled, I am wholly of this world.
I am the connection point between heaven and earth. I am
the vehicle through which the divine Will achieves worldly
manifestation.

... Having obtained what I came for, I again affirm/acknowledge
my relationship to the source. (I occasionally feel like
offering thanks ... but that would be missing the point :-)

-----END--QUOTATION-----

II. A Brief History of the Golden Dawn

The history of the Golden Dawn seemingly begins in 1881, when Samuel Liddell Mathers met Dr.'s William Wynn Westcott and William Robert Woodman, and entered the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, a scholarly group devoted to studying Rosicrucian and Hermetic topics, open to Master Masons only. Westcott took young Mathers under his wing, and Mathers quickly advanced to the top of that organization.

The ``magical mottoes" of these three men may provide insight into their characters. Mathers took the mottoes 'S Rioghail Mo Dhream, or ``Royal is my tribe" in Gaelic, and Deo Duce Comite Ferro, or ``With God as my leader and the sword as my companion." Westcott was known as Sapere Aude, or ``Dare to be wise," and Woodman was known as Magna Est Veritas Et Praevalehit, or ``Great is the truth and it shall prevail."

The next key development was in 1887 with the ``discovery" of the famous Cipher Manuscripts. Modern scholarship seems to point to prolific Masonic author Kenneth Mackenzie as their author, but whether the Cipher Manuscripts were found in a Masonic library, bought from a used bookshop, or fabricated whole-cloth, these documents contained summaries of the first five Golden Dawn initiation rituals (0=0 to 4=7). They were written in a simple, well-known alphabetic code based on the Polygraphiae of Johann Trithemius, and complete facsimiles and transcriptions have been published in, e.g., Kuntz's The Complete Golden Dawn Cipher Manuscript (see Part V, below). Mathers took to them with a passion, and fleshed them out into full-blown rituals of ceremonial magic. Written on the manuscripts was the address of a certain Fraulein Sprengel (Sapiens Dominabitur Astris, or ``The wise one will be ruled by the stars") in Germany, but many believe that Fraulein Sprengel was invented by Westcott to provide a sense of continental authority and legitimacy to this material.

Even if not directly German in origin, many of the magical concepts inherent in the Golden Dawn system were strongly influenced by continental European sources. Without a doubt, the works of the esteemed French occultist Eliphas Levi (1810-1875) were known to the originators of the Golden Dawn system. Levi's students, such as

Stanislas de Guaita, Josephin Peledan, and Gerard Encausse ("Papus") gathered in societies such as the "Kabalistic Rose+Croix" and the "Catholic Rose+Croix of the Temple and the Grail." From the 1880s to the 1910s, these groups, or Salons, gathered to study ancient texts, practice magic and meditative techniques, and spread their occult knowledge to the public.

It was a year later, in 1888, that Mathers, Westcott, and Woodman inaugurated the first British Temple, Isis-Urania, and began to admit men and women as Neophytes. In 1890, Mathers married Mina ("Moina") Bergson, sister of philosopher and writer Henri Bergson, and in 1892 they moved to Paris. The Ahathoor Temple was established, and it was not too long after that they clairvoyantly "brought forth" the Second Order (5=6 to 7=4) rituals and teachings. Some of the 5=6 ritual material, however, came from the Cipher Manuscripts. The first Vault of the Adepti, a required piece of "scenery" for Second Order rituals, was built in London, in Thavies Inn off Holborn Circus.

The following list of original G.D. Temples came originally from Ithell Colquhoun's biography of Mathers, *Sword of Wisdom*, but has been updated extensively with the help of several independent scholars. Any additional information, of course, would be greatly appreciated. (It goes without saying that the actual existence of Temples 1 and 2 is highly doubtful, but I include representative information about them from written histories and conjectures for completeness.)

ORIGINAL GOLDEN DAWN TEMPLES

Temple Name	Date Founded	Location and Chiefs
1. Licht, Liebe, und Leben	1808 ?	Frankfurt: "Fraulein Sprengel"
2. Hermanoubis	1883 ?	London: Hockley, Mackenzie, Woodford
3. Isis-Urania	1 Mar. 1888	London: Westcott, Woodman, Mathers
4. Osiris	8 Oct. 1888	Weston-super-Mare: B. Cox
5. Horus	10 Oct. 1888	Bradford: T. H. Pattinson
6. Amen-Ra	8 Jun. 1893	Edinburgh: J. W. Brodie-Innes
7. Ahathoor	3 Dec. 1893	Paris: S. L. M. Mathers
8. Thme (Ihme?)	1897	Chicago: G. W. Wiggs
9. Thoth-Hermes	1897	New York: C. and E. D. Lockwood, M. J. Whitty
10. Isis [Alpha et Omega 1]	May 1900	West London: E. W. Berridge

In 1900, a schism rocked the Order. Ms. Annie Horniman, a member of the Isis-Urania Second Order, led a "revolt" against Mathers over several magical, political, and monetary issues. Anger led to posturing, which eventually led to litigation concerning the ownership of the temple furniture and other magical trappings. Also at about this time, many remaining G.D. members (including the Matherses) were duped by a Mr. and Mrs. "Theo Horos," a.k.a. American confidence tricksters Frank Jackson and Editha Salomon, who claimed to be high-grade members. Many lost a good deal of money and property, but the Horos couple were convicted of fraud and the rape of a 16 year old girl in 1901. However, the G.D. was dragged through the mud of ignorant publicity and was never again the same. Because of this publicity, Mathers changed the name of his Order to Alpha et Omega, and the dissenting London members in the

Isis-Urania Temple changed the name of their Order to the Hermetic Order of the Morgenrothe.

The problems were not over, however. In 1903, Aleister Crowley, who previously seemed the "magical heir apparent" to Mathers, defected to form his own organizations (see Question 8 above). Six years later, Crowley published G.D. rituals and doctrine in his journal, *The Equinox*, but its limited readership precluded the kind of impact that Regardie's subsequent publishing efforts produced. Also in 1903, the Isis-Urania Temple in London split into two further dissenting groups: (1) the Stella Matutina, under Robert W. Felkin, William Butler Yeats, and many others, and (2) the Holy Order of the G.D. (and later, the Independent and Rectified Rite), under A. E. Waite. These two groups differed primarily on the importance of magic (1) versus mysticism (2), but internal politics also had a say in this split.

With the "golden age" of the G.D. over, its members went their myriad ways. The Golden Dawn work, however, has been continued by many groups. Most noticeably, the Stella Matutina and its varied offshoots have continued in an unbroken line until as late as the 1970s. Also noteworthy is the contribution of Violet Mary Firth (Dion Fortune; from *Deo Non Fortuna*, or "God, not chance"), who formed the Fraternity (later, Society) of the Inner Light, which functioned for many decades as an alternative, but closely related, group.

What follows is a far-from-complete listing of these succeeding organizations, originally culled from Colquhoun's *Sword of Wisdom*. Note that the list ends near the beginning of the 1970s. Most likely, any more recent groups are listed in Part IV, the list of active Golden Dawn groups, below.

SELECTED OFFSHOOTS, VARIANTS, AND CO-INFLUENCED GROUPS

Name of Group	Date Founded	Location and Founders
The Sphere	c. 1897	London: F. Farr
Hermetic Society of the Morgenrothe	1902	London: Felkin, Brodie-Innes, Bullock
Order of Light	1902	Bradford: T. H. Pattinson
Stella Matutina (S.M.) [Amoun Temple]	1903	London: R. W. Felkin
Holy Order of the G.D.	1903	London: Waite, Blackden, Ayton
A. .'. A. .'. (Astron Argon)	c. 1907	London: A. Crowley, G. C. Jones
Zos Kia Cultus	c. 1910	London: A. O. Spare
Cromlech Temple [Solar Order]	1910	Edinburgh, London: J. W. Brodie-Innes
Smaragdum Thalasses/Whare Ra (S.M.)	1912	New Zealand: R. W. Felkin
Ordo Templi Orientis [orig. c. 1895]	1912	London: A. Crowley
Alpha et Omega 2 (Northern)	1913	Edinburgh, London: J. W. Brodie-Innes
Hermes Temple (S.M.)	1916	Bristol: R. W. Felkin
Merlin Temple (S.M.?)	1916	London: R. W. Felkin
Secret College in London (S.M.?)	1916	London: R. W. Felkin
Guild of St. Raphael	1916	London: Felkin and Roseveare
Fellowship of the True Rosy Cross [Salvator Mundi]	1916	London: A. E. Waite

Shrine of Wisdom c. 1916 Hermon Hill, N. London: A. E. Waite?
 Nuada (Druid Order) c. 1916 Clapham, London: G. W. M. Reid
 Alpha et Omega 3 (Southern) 1919 London: M. M. Mathers
 Ptah Temple (Alpha et Omega ``No. 10") 1919 Philadelphia: L. Geise, E. Dame
 Atoum Temple (Alpha et Omega ``No. 20") 1920 Los Angeles
 School of Ageless Widsomc. 1920 Chicago: P. F. Case
 Themis Temple (Alpha et Omega ``No. 30") 1921 San Francisco?
 Fraternity/Society of Inner Light 1922 London: Dion Fortune
 Guild of the Master Jesus c. 1925 London: Dion Fortune
 Hermanoubis Temple c. 1930 Bristol
 Universal Order c. 1935 London and Brook, Surrey
 Builders of the Adytum [orig. c. 1920] c. 1937 Los Angeles: P. F. Case
 Order of the Morning Star c. 1945 London: M. Montalban
 Garderian Wicca c. 1952 London: G. B. Gardner
 Order of the Cubic Stone 1965 Wolverhampton: H. T. Howard
 Order of the Sacred Word c. 1967 London: R. Hunt

III. Golden Dawn Minutae

There are several bits of miscellaneous trivia that seem appropriate to include in this FAQ, mainly because they do not appear in any of the published Golden Dawn books and might be considered helpful or useful. However, they are not actually ``answers" to questions that have been ``frequently asked!"

I will attempt to expand this section as possible, but will limit this information to material not easily found elsewhere.

Mythical Members:

Several books, such as Gilbert's Golden Dawn Companion and Kuntz's Golden Dawn Source Book, contain detailed lists of the members of the various historical Golden Dawn Temples. These have been taken from actual membership rolls and other primary source material. What might be interesting, though, is a list of famous people who have been claimed to be members of the Golden Dawn, but actually were not. This may help ``set the record straight" and avoid the propagation of inaccuracies in new overviews and histories of the Golden Dawn.

It seems quite clear from the available reference material (but there is probably never 100 percent certainty) that the following people were NOT registered members of any Golden Dawn organization:

E. A. Wallis Budge, author and Egyptologist
 Lord Edward Bulwer-Lytton, author
 Arthur Conan Doyle, author

H. Rider Haggard, author
Fredrick Hockley, famous Freemason
Eliphas Levi (a.k.a. Alphonse Louis Constant), author and occultist
Kenneth MacKenzie, author
Edward Munch, artist
Jean Marie Ragon, author
Sax Rohmer (a.k.a. A. S. Ward), author
Bram Stoker, author
August Strindberg, author, poet, and artist
Revd. A. F. A. Woodward, famous Freemason

The Neophyte Chemicals

In published versions of the Neophyte (0=0) initiation ceremony, an impressive chemical reaction is presented to the new initiate. Because of the desire for secrecy (self-imposed or not) about these ceremonies, this FAQ is not really the place to discuss the meaning or appearance of this reaction.

However, the names of the actual chemicals used are not usually included in the published descriptions of this ceremony. Thus, I would like to present them here, and acknowledge the posting of Tim S. Walker (on 13 May 1998) to the Usenet news group alt.magick, as the source of this information. The two chemicals to be combined are:

Ferric Ammonium Sulfate
and
Sodium Salicylate

When working with chemicals, please take all necessary safety precautions!

IV. List of Active Golden Dawn Temples and Related Organizations

Notes:

I am not in any way affiliated with any of these organizations. This information comes from advertisements in various esoteric publications, the Internet, and personal correspondence. Many of these organizations charge a great deal of money for their teachings, and I am in no way condoning that practice nor condemning it. I'm just providing the information.

I am greatly indebted to the following individuals for providing a great deal of useful information about many of the Orders listed below. Much of the detail in the listings (and elsewhere in this FAQ) is attributable to their diligent detective work.

Christopher Ward, Baird Stafford, Harvey Newstrom, Richard Leo Stokes, Luke Roberts, Naia Kirkpatrick, Vere C. Chappell, Gregory Peters, Bill Heidrick, Alexander Walker, Christeos Pir, Lainie Petersen, Vivienne O'Regan, Dora Gyn/QBL, James A. Eshelman, Darcy Kuntz, Laura Jennings-Yorke, Pat Zalewski, ``Wizard," Art de Hoyos, Mitch Henson.

Almost by definition, a directory of ``secret" societies and groups is going to be woefully incomplete, and perpetually out of date. If anyone has any additional information, or spots any errors in the following, please let me know, so we can make this list as complete as possible.

I will start this list with a classified advertisement from the Winter 1991 issue of Gnosis magazine, which parallels my own opinions:

``The Golden Dawn is not a commercial enterprise. Initiation is not for sale. There are Temples that hold valid initiatory succession from the original Mother Temple in London which are quietly doing the Great Work. The Order exists. When the student is ready, the teacher will appear."

Successor Golden Dawn Organizations

These groups practice within a strict Golden Dawn form and see themselves as direct successors to the original Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and its tradition.

August Order of Light

London, York, and Bradford, U.K.

Descended from the original Horus Temple of the G.D. in Bradford, this group was originally comprised only of members of the Masonic Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, but as of 1994, there were about 87 men and women. One of the Temples has a correspondence course, but they seem very selective in who participates. Unlike some other G.D. Orders, their ``Inner Order" seems to encompass the grades of 8=3 and above.

Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

P.O. Box 1757, Elfers, FL 34680-1757

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn is a non-profit Florida corporation whose goal is the continued preservation of that body of knowledge known as Hermeticism or the Western Esoteric Tradition. This organization promotes the teachings of the original Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a magical fraternity founded in London in 1888 by Dr. William Wynn Westcott and Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, which ceased to exist under that name in 1903 but which continued for a number of years under the names of two spin-off organizations, the Stella Matutina and the Alpha et Omega.

Re-inaugurated by Israel Regardie on 26 June 1982 in Columbus, GA. Regardie had called together three unacquainted fraters and one soror who were reviving the G.D. in the United States in the 1970s. The Temple associated with Chic Cicero, ``Isis-Urania, No. 18," originated in Columbus, Georgia in the late 1970s, and is now in a nearby state. Israel Regardie visited, consecrated, and autographed this Temple's Vault of the Adepti. On 10 April 1995, Chic Cicero filed for a U.S. Federal Trademark for the name

``Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn," with the expressed purpose of preserving the tradition for all members of valid Golden Dawn groups. For more information, one can send email or see their WWW site.

Hermetic Order of the Morning Star International

(formerly: Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn International)

(formerly: Hermetic Order of the Eternal Golden Dawn)

14050 Cherry Avenue, Suite R-159 - Dept. G, Fontana, CA 92337, USA

Imperator Temple of Isis, Mighty Mother, no. 12 (909)-341-5628

Tehuti Temple, no. 13, Vancouver, BC (604)-687-6979

Sanctuary of Michael, San Diego, CA contact via Isis

Sanctuary of Amon-Ra, Houston, TX (713)-267-4822

Sanctuary of Hermanubis, Los Angeles, CA. (310)-289-7214

Sanctuary of Auriel, Athens, GA (706)-208-0105

Complete correspondence course available. Individual guidance, full membership if accepted. Send them email for a free information packet with an entrance application.

This Order claims an initiatory lineage via the Mathers' Alpha et Omega Temples in America. Initial dues for the Outer Order are \$150 (1 year's mailings: \$30, dues \$65, Neophyte initiation fee \$55), and adepts are available by phone to answer questions. Initiations can be done in person or astrally, and the study material is said to be very comprehensive. There is no Thelema or sex magic. As of early 1998, the H.O.M.S.I. published the magazine ``The Golden Dawn Quarterly," \$22/year, as well as the members-only newsletter ``Tablets of Thoth." More information can be obtained on their web site, or via email.

Invisible Temple No. 0, Ordo Roseae Rubeae et Aurea Crucis

Various Locations, Europe and America

An independent branch of Israel Regardie's Hermetic Temple and Order of the Golden Dawn, via Christopher Hyatt (Alan Miller). The 6=5 and 7=4 grades are conferred on qualified adepts who have performed the prerequisite work in the Outer Order, and are able to manage a Golden Dawn Temple. Members known to be in California, Maryland, Minnesota, Texas, Virginia, and Washington, DC. Most male members are also high-grade Masons.

Ordo Rosae Rubeae et Aureae Crucis (and Hermetic Order of the G.D.)

270 North Canon Drive, Suite 1302, Beverly Hills, CA 90210

Affiliated with Cris Monnastre, and related to Regardie's re-inauguration of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1982, this group published a full-page ``Manifesto Fraternitatis" in the Fall 1995 issue of Gnosis magazine, under the direction of the Secret Chiefs of the Ordo Argenti Astri (the Third Order). They proclaimed the abrogation of previously published passwords, and mentioned their possession of initiation rituals for all grades of the Second and Third Orders. More information is available about these Orders, as well as the ``United Confederation of Independent and Autonomous Temples," at their WWW site (or this alternate site), or via email.

Templo L.V.X. Thot

Buenos Aires, Argentina

A Spanish-speaking Golden Dawn organization which offers physical instruction, initiations, and correspondence courses in Qabalah, astrology, tarot, alchemy, Enochian magic, tattvas, geomancy, meditation, path travels, gematria, Egyptian mysteries, and ritual magic. They are associated with the ``United Confederation of Independent and Autonomous Temples." For more information contact them via email or see their WWW site.

Golden Dawn Derived Orders

These groups practice traditions derived from the work of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn but have moved their work into a number of directions. They do not claim to be direct successors to the original order.

August Order of the Mystic Rose

P.O. Box 71, Mt. View, CA 94042

Described briefly by Mary K. Greer in *Women of the Golden Dawn*, this group is affiliated with Robert Word, a scholar of Golden Dawn history. When requesting information, Greer suggests a donation of \$2 to help cover mailing costs.

Builders of the Adytum (B.O.T.A.)

5101-05 North Figueroa St., Los Angeles, CA 90042, TEL (323)-255-7141, FAX (323)-255-4166

Established by Paul Foster Case and/or Ann Davies as an ``outer vehicle of the inner school," this group is descended from the original New York Thoth-Hermes Temple (in that the founders were Chiefs of Thoth-Hermes). Its Second Order was originally called ``The School of Ageless Wisdom." See Case's *True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order*, and his other books, for more information. Free brochure available. Correspondence course. For the first year or so, one pays \$10/month, and obtains a self-initiation ritual, seven weeks of instruction on ``Practical Occultism," then about a year of Tarot instruction. The Tarot material is highly recommended by many. If one is near a BOTA Temple or Proanos, members can participate in rituals, Temple services, and initiations. Local study groups are also in many cities. See also their Web page. There is also a listserv study-group mailing list.

Fraternity of the Hidden Light / Fraternitas LVX Occulta (F.L.O.)

P.O. Box 5094, Dept. S, Covina, CA 91723, USA

P.O. Box 70524, 2938 Dundas St. West, Toronto, Ontario M6P 4E7

Founded in the mid-1980s by Paul A. Clark and others, this ``modern day repository of the Hermetic Arts" offers a quality correspondence course, as well as teaching and ceremonial work in Lodges and Temples in the USA and Canada. A ``direct lineal descendant" of the Golden Dawn via a reconstituted ``Rosicrucian Order of the Alpha et Omega in America," F.L.O. also assimilates traditions from B.O.T.A., as well as ``new

revelations from continual research." Color and sound based healing techniques are an important part of the curriculum. Fees and suggested donations are said to be very reasonable. Lodges in Los Angeles, Dallas, Boston, Denver, and Toronto. A study group is also forming in the Chicago area (phone contact: 773-381-5701). Christopher Ward lists himself as an email contact for anyone who wants more information, and he maintains the Home Page for the F.L.O.

New Zealand Guild of Alchemists

P.O. Box 5115, Greenmeadows, Napier, New Zealand

A quasi-G.D. organization, originally given a warrant in 1990 by an ex-Whare-Ra Adept (Percy Williams, 6=5) to found a Temple called 'Horus.' The Horus Temple was founded in Hawkes Bay by Greg Boag, according to the material on the Te-Neteru Sanctuary Web page (see below). Currently they are oriented mainly toward PRS alchemy (both psychological and practical), but it is not known if this group continues to initiate into the Golden Dawn proper.

O.H.A.D.

26 Rue Francois Bonvin, 75015, Paris, France

Mentioned briefly by Mary K. Greer in *Women of the Golden Dawn*. When requesting information, Greer suggests a donation of \$2 to help cover mailing costs.

Society of the Inner Light

38 Steele's Road, London NW3 4RG, U.K.

Continuation of Dion Fortune's (and William Gray's) Society of the Inner Light. Still active and continuing to provide a correspondence course.

Servants of the Light

P.O. Box 215, St. Helier, Jersey (Channel Islands), U.K. JE4 1AB

P.O. Box 6563, Syracuse, NY 13217-6563, USA

Descendant of Dion Fortune's Society of the Inner Light. Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki, Director of Studies (she succeeded W. E. Butler). The fifty-six lesson course (US \$10/lesson) is based on Qabalah, the Grail Legend, and the Arthurian mythos, and lasts several years. Students and graduates of the course may join Lodges in England and Scotland, Stockholm, Vancouver BC, and the U.S. (Atlanta, Denver, and soon one in the Northeast). The SOL is non-profit, and publishes its own Tarot deck and a House magazine. They also hold several large-scale seminars/retreats (see large advertisements in *Gnosis* magazine). Email contacts are Peter Cawley and Fran Keegan, and there is also a WWW page.

Star and Cross

P.O. Box 25541, Dallas, TX 75225, USA

Home study course: Dion Fortune's inner teachings, ``Western Tradition of the Mysteries." Rumored to have a strong emphasis on Jungian psychology.

Temple of Thelema

222 North Manhattan Place, Los Angeles, CA 90004 (Harpocrates Temple 1)

P.O. Box 415, Oroville, CA 95965 (Nuit Mother Temple)
P.O. Box 58, Carmichael, CA 95609 (Silver Star Pronaos 2)
PMB 774, 236 West Portal Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94127 (Agape Temple 4)
P.O. Box 70695, 2938 Dundas Street West, Toronto, ONT M6P 1Y8 (Avalon Pronaos 7)

This group, also an outer vehicle ``in the service" of Crowley's A.A., was founded in 1989 by Jim Eshelman, Phyllis Seckler, and Anna-Kria King. Updated to conform to the Law of Thelema, the Temple of Thelema is the ceremonial and initiatory vehicle of the College of Thelema, founded in 1973 by Phyllis Seckler (Soror Meral). COT shares the contact addresses given above, and also publishes a bi-annual journal called Black Pearl. (Their journal In the Continuum, published between 1973 and 1996, is still available in back issues.) T.O.T.'s innovations to the Golden Dawn system are substantial, as they can be utilized as ``lower octave" introductions to the A.A., but they do conform to the original formulae of the Cipher Manuscripts. For more info, see their WWW site.

Order of the Thelemic Golden Dawn (T.G.D.)

Grand Temple address: Thelemic Golden Dawn, 1626 No. Wilcox Ave. #418, Los Angeles, CA USA 90028. Chief Officer: David Cherubim (Frater Aurora Aureae).

Temple of Baphomet [Grand Temple]
Temple of Hadit, MA
Temple of Ra-Hoor-Khuit, CO
Sanctuary of Babalon, NY
Sanctuary of the Phoenix, FL
Sanctuary of Nuit, AUSTRALIA

OrderoftheTGD@aol.com
wlpssp@tiac.net
rahoorkhuit@coloradomartialarts.com
babalon@tgd.org
qshth@aol.com
vlad@picknowl.com.au

A reconstructed version of the Golden Dawn based mainly on Aleister Crowley's Religion of Thelema. No longer affiliated with New Falcon Publications or the Israel Regardie Foundation. There is no charge for initiations or other services, but a modest annual donation is requested. The Thelemic Golden Dawn is affiliated with the Aleister Crowley Foundation (ACF). Services offered include Temple and/or Self-Initiation ceremonies, lessons, newsletters and classes at no charge. Many of their online rituals and instructions are archived on their main WWW site [<http://www.tgd.org/>] or are available via email [OrderoftheTGD@aol.com].

Related Occult Organizations

These are other modern groups related to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in some way or deriving some, but not the main body, of their work from that order.

Church/Brotherhood of Light

Dept. G - 2341 Coral St., Los Angeles, CA 90031-2916, TEL (213)-226-0453
Correspondence study available since 1932. Not really part of the G.D. tradition, but related in spirit. Originated as The Hermetic Brotherhood of Light in Scotland in the late

1870s, members such as Peter Davidson circulated lessons on magic (sexual magic in the higher degrees, influenced by the Tantric approach of "Max Theon," or Louis Maximillian Bimstein) mainly through the mail. In the 1890s, a lodge formed in France which contained many prominent French occultists. Also, Davidson moved to Georgia and founded a Christian mystical community. In 1915, Elbert Benjamine ("C. C. Zain") came from Georgia to California, and assimilated Davidson's material into 210 lessons in 22 books, and began the Church of Light in 1932. Its focus is mainly on astrology (the "Religion of the Stars"), but there are fifty initiatory degrees as well. For more details, see their Web page. See also an article by Joscelyn Godwin in the quarterly journal Theosophical History, and his new book The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser), 1995.

Hermetic Fellowship

P.O. Box 20424, Portland, OR 97294-0424

A non-profit religious organization, not formally connected to the Golden Dawn, but was established in 1995 for seekers interested in the Western Esoteric Tradition, Rosicrucianism, Qabalah, alchemy, Gnosticism, Neo-Paganism, and the Grail Quest. Their Priestesses and Priests can perform, e.g., legal marriages in the state of Oregon. Much more information can be found on their WWW site., or one can email Adam Forrest.

Order of the Aurum Solis (Order of the Sacred Word)

BCM Tessera, London, WC1N 3XX, U.K.

Initiatory organization described in Denning and Phillips' Magical Philosophy series. While seemingly related to the Golden Dawn, its symbolism is more "Byzantine" (or "Ogdoadic") than Rosicrucian, although many similar traditions (Kabbalah, alchemy, neo-Platonism) are drawn from. Working groups exist in England, America, continental Europe, and West Africa, and entry is currently via invitation only. A Lodge Master in San Diego, CA maintains a Web page with a bit of extra information.

Oxford Golden Dawn Occult Society

P.O. Box 250, Oxford, OX1 1AP, UK

A group which aims to "disseminate authentic information about the occult," and which organizes speakers, workshops, and conferences. They offer training in Oxford for students, have monthly meetings and a public annual conference in October, and publish a journal "Nuit-Isis." This group is more of a Thelemic organization than a Golden Dawn one. Their London Lodge has a membership of about 40, and meets regularly at sites around London. Associate membership is 5 UK pounds, and details can be found by telephoning Mogg Morgan at +44 (0)1865 243671, by email, or on their WWW site.

Societas Rosicruciana (Masonic)

Soc. Ros. in Anglia (50 Colleges in England and abroad)

Soc. Ros. in Scotia (5 Colleges in Scotland)

Soc. Ros. in Civitatibus Foederatis (32 Colleges in the U.S. and abroad)

Originally founded in 1866 by Robert Wentworth Little as an esoteric study organization

for Master Masons. The three founding members of the Golden Dawn were high-grade members, and many features of the Soc. Ros. (such as the names of the Rosicrucian grades) made their way into the Golden Dawn. Harold Voorhis' comprehensive history of the Soc. Ros. (see the References below) contains much more information. The Masonic qualification still exists today, and membership is only by invitation. The California College of the S.R.I.C.F. maintains a WWW page.

Te-Neteru Sanctuary (B.W Et Custosi Tutelae)
Southland, New Zealand

Although primarily descended from a group known as the ``Guardians of Grace and Blessing," this group also traces a descent from the Whare-Ra Temple of the Stella Matutina, via a Frater Fiat Lux, who joined Whare-Ra in 1936 and died in 1994. This Order holds a charter to initiate to the level of Adeptus Major, but operates mainly independently of the G.D. tradition. Their emphasis is ``Craft-oriented and based upon practical magic." They do not charge fees for membership, initiation, or training. For more information, see their WWW site.

V. Useful References

This listing of books and journal articles related to the Golden Dawn is nowhere near being a complete or comprehensive bibliography. This is simply a beginning-point for interested readers to learn more from independent sources other than this FAQ. Many of these books themselves contain bibliographies and reference lists which can be used to further explore the wealth of published Golden Dawn material.

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http://www.hermetic.com/gdlibrary/whare_ra/

44 captures

16 Oct 2009 - 26 Jan 2021

Sep OCT Jan

16

2008 2009 2010

About this capture
The Golden Dawn
Library Project

Whare Ra Papers

This is a small collection of documents from the Whare Ra Temple in New Zealand, which existed until just a couple of decades ago.

These are from a Private Collection and spelling mistakes and such have been left intact.

Syllabus 6 = 5

Personal Preparation of a Candidate for Grades 6-5 & 7-4

Preparation for Receiving 8=3 Grade

Lecture on the Four Scales of Colour

Main Golden Dawn Library Page

http://hermetic.com/gdlibrary/whare_ra/6-5_preparation.html

19 captures

3 Jan 2010 - 17 Oct 2017

Dec JAN Jun

03

2009 2010 2012

About this capture

A4 pages in cardboard cover.

Syllabus 6 = 5

Study the obligation and plan how to carry out the Twofold life literally. This is a Mystical Grade and has no lectures or Examinations.

2. Copy 4 Trees in their Appropriate Colour Scales.
3. Copy and practise 6 = 5 Exercises.
4. Try to find your own Path for the Inner Life.
5. Now is the time to fill in gaps of the 5=6 syllabus and to choose your special subject in which to qualify.
6. Study and work at the Auric Egg.
7. Climb the Tree, i.e. Meditate on each Sephira and Path in order beginning with Malkuth, clairvoyantly if possible.
8. Paint Tarot Pack and Consecrate same.
9. Paint Telesmatic Figure of Rising Sign or Sign of Sol, see Schemahamphorasch.
10. Practise Prithivi Akasa Tatwas to find out your past lives so as to gain a sense of continuity.

DAILY RHYTHM FOR THOSE OF THE GRADE OF GEBURAH.

On awakening make this affirmation.

I will arise and shine for my Light has come, and the Glory of the Lord has risen upon me.

Before leaving the room in the morning say:-

The Life of the Trees is mine, I will arise and walk,
The Life of the Man is mine, I will receive and give,
The Life of the Word is mine, I will utter and love,
The Life of the World is mine, I receive the Spirit,
The Life of the Stars is mine, I am filled with joy,
ELOHIM GEBUR guards me, ELOHIM GEBUR strengthens my hands, yea He guards
my feet.

About Noon, as an intercession for the dying, especially those in zones of war or
catastrophe say:-

O Lord of strength, Elohim Gebur, in all humility of spirit I invoke Thy Blessing. Look
down I implore Thee upon those dying in warfare or catastrophe, & knocking at the gate
of the grave. Grant Thine aid, O God of Israel, who givest power unto Thy people. Pour
forth Thy benediction we beseech Thee. O Thou Fire-hearted One who does send
death that we attain unto Life everlasting: Thou at Whose Word the thunders roll and
the lightning flashes forth, grant that in the midst of storm we may find peace. Master of
the Diadems of Fire crown them with Light that emerging from the darkness of the Tomb
they may enter upon the Dawn of Endless Day.

Alternative for those undergoing operations.

O Thou who makest perfected souls to enter into everlasting glory, cause now we
beseech Thee the perfected Soul of & & & to be victorious over death. Having ears
may he hear with understanding, having eyes may he perceive with the Spirit: having
lips may he speak the truth: having a heart may he love righteousness. Quicken in him
O Divine Creator. the Life Divine: draw him with cords that he may run after Thee: bind
him to the Altar that he may evermore serve Thee.

On going to bed repeat:-

Mother of Life, Mother of all, Matrona, we would be even as the Burning Bush which
was not consumed - a sign to those who have eyes to see. Star of the Sea, in Thy
hands is the Lamp of Understanding, show us if for an instant Thine ineffable fragrance.
Tower of Ivory enclose us in Thy protecting Purity. Strengthen me who seek

enlightenment. through the gates of darkness that passing through the valley of bitterness I may find therein the Well of Living Water. Reflect upon my soul those visions of the Spirit which awaken the understanding and beckon us to the Pisgah Heights of Holiness. There may I find the Pearl of great price which is also the loadstone of the wise.

SHEKINAH
THE FOUR SCALES OF COLOUR.
SEPHIRA

ATZILUTH

BRIAH

YETZIRAH

ASSIAH

KING

QUEEN

PRINCE

PRINCESS

Kether

White

White

White

White, rayed with gold.

Chokmah

Pure soft blue

Grey

Pearl grey

White, flecked with red, blue & yellow

Binah

Crimson

Black

Crimson with Black edge & rays

Grey flecked with pink.

Chesed

Deep violet

Blue

Deep purple

Deep azure, flecked yellow

Geburah

Orange

Scarlet

Bright Scarlet

Red, flecked with Black.

Tiphareth.

Clear Rose Pink

Daffodil Yellow

Rich Salmon (Pink)

Golden Amber

Netzach

Amber

Green

Bright yellow-green

Olive, flecked golden.

Hod

Violet purple.

Persimon (tawny orange)

Red-russet

Yellow-brown, Flecked-white.

Yesod

Indigo

Dark petunia

Very dark purple

Citrine flecked azure.

Paths.

Malkuth

Yellow

Tertiaries

Tertiaries Flecked Into glowing gold

Black, rayed with Yellow

Planetary

Saturn

Dark Indigo

Black

Blue black

Black, rayed blue.

Jupiter

Violet

Blue

Blue purple

Bright blue, rayed yellow.

Mars

Poppy red

Red

Rich scarlet

Scarlet, rayed amber.

Sun

Golden yellow

Golden yellow

Rich amber

Amber, rayed red.

Venus

Emerald green

Sky blue

Pale blue green.

Cerise, rayed with pale green.

Mercury

Primrose yellow

Violet

Grey

Indigo, rayed violet

Luna

Pale silvery blue

Silvery white

Very cold pale blue.

Silver, rayed sky-blue.

THE FOUR SCALES OF COLOUR
KING

PAGE 2.

QUEEN

PRINCE

PRINCESS

Paths of Elements.

WATER

Deep blue

Olive green

Greenish lemon

White flecked With black.

Air

Pale yellow

Pale blue

Greenish grey

Yellow-green, Flecked with yellow.

Fire

Orange red

Scarlet

Red

Red, flecked with green

ZODIACAL PATHS.

Aries. Blood red

Dark rose red

Rich red

Crimson.

Taurus. Red orange

Maroon

Red-grey-brown.

Rich brown.

Gemini. Marigold

Violet

RED-grey-violet

Very pale grey white tinged purple

Cancer Dark amber

Deep blue purple

Silver grey neutral

Dark blue grey

Leo. Greenish yellow

Black

Yellowish grey

Reddish amber (brown)

Virgo. Yellow green